

# The LENINIST

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## Guildford 4: now free all political prisoners!

**T**HE DIRECTOR of Public Prosecutions has "concluded" that after 15 years "it would be wrong for the Crown to sustain the convictions" of Patrick Armstrong, Carole Richardson, Paul Hill and Gerard Conlon. The Guildford 4, like the Birmingham 6, were victims of Britain's war in Ireland. In effect, so long as Britain could retain a pretext for holding them, they were political hostages in this war.

Of course, no one believed them 'guilty' of the Guildford and Woolwich bombings in 1974. However, 'guilt' or 'innocence' is irrelevant for Britain. It never worried about such niceties when it murdered 14 unarmed nationalists on Bloody Sunday 1972. It was not unduly concerned about such criteria when it introduced internment or shoot-to-kill. Covert British operations such as the Miami Showband massacre were not conducted on such a basis. And the Prevention of Terrorism Act, brought in under the pretext of the Birmingham bomb, has not been used to establish the 'guilt' or 'innocence' of any Irish man or woman.

The purpose of all these actions is terror: step out of line and you're dead, or banged up for life. In Britain the PTA has been used as a threat against the Irish community, with the cases of the Guildford 4,

Birmingham 6 and the Maguire 7 as examples to show that Britain can and will use this threat.

Britain, though, is not a fascist society where such weapons can be used openly. State terror must generally operate under the rule of law. Irish freedom fighters – indeed potentially all Irish people – have therefore to be portrayed as criminals. This hypocritical device is of vital importance to the ruling class.

That decrepit old vulture, former Master of the Rolls, Lord Denning, put it rather well in the context of the Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6. He warned the media against revealing the innocence of these people because it would undermine the standing of the law and show that "the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats". The law for Denning is more important than the righting of one or two cases, which would in themselves undermine it.

Denning's law is an instrument to uphold the rule of his class. If Irish freedom threatens this, then the Irish people become victims of it.

That the case of the Guildford 4 has cracked this edifice is excellent. The 'integrity' of former Chancellor and Attorney General, Lord Havers, who was prosecuting counsel, Sir Peter Imbert, now

Metropolitan Police Commissioner, who took their confessions, Lord Roskill the main judge who turned down their appeal and many other leading figures in the police and judiciary has been brought into question, with talk of criminal proceedings against the former being heard. The case of the Birmingham 6, left to rot by British 'justice', also comes back on the agenda. Communists, indeed all genuine democrats, must welcome this.

But we must cut deeper. Obviously, it is not a case of a few 'bad apples', the odd misuse of a truncheon and selective consideration of evidence. It was and is a necessary part of British rule in Ireland and class rule at home. At the time scapegoats had to be found, no matter who. This was done, both to terrorise the Irish community and to provide a focal point for the whipped up British chauvinism. Armstrong, Richardson, Hill and Conlon could be made to fit the bill. The police and judiciary merely played the role demanded of them by the system. The system bears the guilt.

We demand the freeing of the Birmingham 6, not through a judicial enquiry, as the Labour Party wants, but through mass working class anti-imperialist action. As long Britain's war in Ireland continues, the PTA or an equivalent

will be used against supporters of Irish liberation and there will be more Guildford Fours, more Birmingham Sixes. Workers in Britain must be won to side with the Irish and for the freeing of all Irish political prisoners.

Overt proof of the corruption of the system presents opportunities to argue for this among wider layers. It does not, however, present short cuts. Just so long as British workers identify with 'their' state and its war in Ireland they will be incapable of fighting against overt injustices such as the Guildford 4 case. For that matter, they will be incapable of fighting in their own defence. After all, the workers' movement hardly leapt to the defence of Dean Hancock, Russell Shankland or Winston Silcott. They accept the legitimacy of the state's attacks, whether they be against Irish or British workers.

The bourgeoisie can effectively criminalise ordinary Irish men and women because it has won the battle to criminalise the IRA in the eyes of the British working class. However embarrassing they may be, recent events can still be passed off as unfortunate 'errors of judgement' in 'the fight against terrorism'. The fact that much of the left accepts the logic of this is a big problem. It disarms any serious fight against these attacks.

Those who resist the British

state are not criminals. They are 'guilty' of fighting for Ireland's freedom. It is very revealing that through wide strata of British society the release of leading ANC member Walter Sisulu and his comrades should provoke such an enthusiastic reaction, yet the plight of the Irish freedom fighters of the IRA and Inla should be ignored or actively defended.

Has anyone argued that Sisulu was 'innocent' of the charges at the Rivonia trial? To be 'guilty' of resisting oppression is a guilt that one should be proud to bear. The difference between Sisulu and, say, those Volunteers jailed for the fake 'seaside bombing campaign' in 1987 is not one of principle. It is merely that with the latter it is 'our' state which is being challenged in a very direct way, not one thousands of miles away. That, for much of the left, is more important than any principle.

While we will fight to expose the frame ups perpetrated by the British state, that is not the problem, just a necessary symptom. The problem is Britain's rule in Ireland. The solution is to fight to smash it, and to support those already fighting to do that in Ireland.

- Free all political prisoners!
- Smash the PTA!
- Troops out now!

Alan Merrik

## For the IRA! Against the British Army!

**T**HE DEAL bomb aroused the usual hypocritical bile from ruling class circles. For days afterwards we were had dog bites man 'news' of statements from Thatcher, Kinnock, government ministers and royals as to how "shocked" and "outraged" they were. Now, if Kinnock had raised three cheers after the event, that really would have been news. But the fact that imperialism and its hirelings hate the anti-imperialist fighters of the IRA is no news at all.

That they reserve such abhorrence for the IRA is a testimony to the threat its war of liberation over the past twenty years poses to the British state. The fact that it has resisted all that Britain has thrown at it through the years, deepening its support among the nationalist population of the Six Counties, is proof of its effectiveness.

It is not only imperialism and its direct agents in the government and Labour Party leadership which hold such hostility to the IRA, but much of the British left too.

Many 'socialists' and 'revolutionaries' were falling over themselves in the rush to condemn the Deal bombing. The most sickening was the reaction of the Euro whinge-paper *7 Days*, which announced that "Few people in modern public life need each other as much as the IRA Army Council

and Margaret Thatcher" (September 30). As if British imperialism, to which the Euros are so completely subservient, needs a war of national liberation within the boundaries of its own state. Try telling the Volunteers of the IRA who daily put their lives on the line against imperialism, or who languish in Britain's jails, that they actually need its figurehead Thatcher. This is beneath contempt.

The Communist Party of Britain's *Morning Star* presumes to lecture the IRA. The newspaper which is increasingly irrelevant to any section of the working class in Britain and is only kept afloat by prostituting itself to the bureaucracies in the socialist countries has the affrontry to chauvinistically tell the "Irish republican leadership" that its campaign "is a failure" (September 23). If twenty years of resistance in the Six Counties, mobilising hundreds of thousands led by the republican movement, are a failure, then words fail this writer in seeking to describe the truly pathetic nature of the *Morning Star*'s performance over the same period.

Don't you find it strange that organisations which can cheer on armed struggles in South Africa, El Salvador etc without losing sleep at the consequent casualties suddenly develop the scruples of a country

vicar when it comes to Ireland? In reality all this cant is a smoke-screen to cover the British left's failure to confront and defeat British chauvinism throughout the Irish war.

Without exception, the largest groups on the left have attacked the IRA for queering their pitch. "The bombing plays into the hands of the British government" says the *Morning Star* (September 23). *7 Days*: "In one split second of mayhem the Deal bomb let the government off the hook yet again." (September 30). *Militant*: "What it has done is to distract public attention away from all the political pressures on the Tory government" (September 29). And *Socialist Worker*: "The bomb drove from public view the story that throws a true light on what's happening in Northern Ireland 20 years after British troops went in – the 'security forces' collusion with Loyalist killers." (September 30).

The logic of this rag bag of opportunism runs as follows: the fact that British workers stand with their own state is all the fault of the IRA, who have driven them there. It has nothing to do with the ineffectual and opportunist nature of the British left; oh dear me, no.

The IRA, along with the nationalist population which provides its mass support, are under

attack from loyalist murder gangs, behind which stands the British state. The IRA responds, as it has every right to do, by taking the war to the heart of Britain, striking at the beast in its lair. This gives all anti-imperialists cause for celebration. But the majority of the British left's 'anti-imperialism' is no more than a thin veneer. For them, the IRA has stolen from them the opportunity of a nice little sob story, in which the nationalists are portrayed as passive victims of 'the Tories' (never Labour, funny enough).

The deals with Loyalists, for the likes of the SWP, *Militant* and 'official communists', prove that Britain is not 'playing the white man'. This is an all too familiar story. When the great Irish socialist James Connolly took up arms against British imperialism in 1916 he commented that the British socialists would not understand this fight. He was proven right, as his British 'comrades' of the Second International applauded his murder by firing squad. At the other end of the century from the Easter Rising the same is still true.

Leninists, on the other hand, do not try and deny the right of the oppressed to resist their oppressors. We welcome it, especially when those oppressors are 'our' state. And we defend the right of the oppressed to resist in

whatever way they choose. How dare the likes of the *Morning Star* point the finger at Irish revolutionaries and accuse them of failure, when throughout the Irish war they have failed – no, not even attempted – to build a movement for Irish freedom!

The only true anti-imperialist stance is to side with the IRA against the counterrevolutionary might of British imperialism. The marines, far more than most, are a symbol of that might. They are active participants in the repression of the Irish people. The ten men who were killed were no brass band from Barnsley; they were members of the organisation who are the real terrorists in Ireland, the British army. *Militant* and its reactionary co-thinkers may mourn the "economic conscripts of Thatcherism" and whine that they "were a very soft target"; we have no such illusions.

Instead we fight for the day when it is not just left to the heroic Volunteers of the IRA to make Britain unsafe for its imperialist legions, but when the working class takes its place in this fight. That can only be done now by taking sides in the Irish war and fighting for that line within the working class. For the IRA – Against the British Army!

Alan Merrik



IN HER speech to the Tory conference faithful Thatcher credited the election of the Tories, in 1979, as sparking off a "world revolution" which is now sweeping "Leipzig, Warsaw, Budapest and even Moscow". The 1917 revolution was apparently a mere "coup d'état". It is what is "happening in Eastern Europe and Russia today" which is the "real revolution".

We will not waste space disputing Thatcher's twaddle. Reactionary politicians by their very nature have to turn truth on its head. Thatcher's revolutionary credentials are as real as Hitler's, Mussolini's and Mosley's. Nonetheless when the Iron Lady praises 'communist' leaders it sounds an alarm bell for all on the other side of the class barricades.

However there are those whose theory is so hopelessly flawed that they insist on not hearing. The SWP and RCP types say that as the October Revolution has left nothing worth defending they cannot see what all the "fuss" is about in Eastern Europe (*the next step*). From a different angle, although just as criminally, the prostitutes of the *Morning Star*'s CPB and the NCP claim that what is going on is the "renewal of socialism". If this were the case Thatcher would not be welcoming it would she. She would vilify it, seek to crush it, not offer praise and friendly advice.

What in fact we are seeing is a decisive moment in the general crisis of bureaucratic socialism; a crisis which although it is being played out more slowly, is on a far higher scale – involving states as well as parties – than the collapse of the opportunist parties of the Second International into social chauvinism in August 1914. Those who will not face up to this are clearly far more part of the problem than they are the solution.

Unable any longer to play any sort of progressive role, behind a facade of democratic rhetoric the 'reformist' or technocratic wing of the bureaucracy (in another travesty of the truth labelled the 'left' by the bourgeois press) is itching to transform itself into a fully fledged capitalist class through a peaceful counterrevolution.

Gorbachev personifies the capitalist road. It is no wonder therefore that this counterrevolutionary has received approbation from the counterrevolutionary Thatcher. But Poland and Hungary are at the moment ahead of the USSR and as such point to where Gorbachevism will lead. Poland has a Solidarnosc government openly committed to the restoration of capitalism. And in Hungary the ruling party has just transformed itself into a social democratic organisation which has the same declared aim.

What we are witnessing though is not only the general crisis of bureaucratic socialism but the collapse of 'official communism' into social democracy worldwide. The Italian Communist Party has in all but name already turned itself into a party of capitalism: other 'official communists' will go the same way. Gorbachev does not object. Euro CPGB general secretary, Gordon MacLennan, has just returned from the Soviet Union saying that he found agreement there that the 'world communist movement' was dead and that any future international get togethers would have to be in cooperation with social democrats and greens. Another word for this is liquidation.

For genuine communists there can be no room for despair or demoralisation. The collapse of the Second International was followed five years later by the birth of the Third: the collapse of 'official communism' will too find its answer. As to the capitalist road, well capitalism has no answers for humankind. It is a system of unemployment, mass starvation and war. The October 16 stock market wobble shows that capitalism is on the verge of a new devastating crisis that will dwarf the 1929 crash. Communists must close their ranks, strengthen their discipline and prepare. Our time is coming.

*The Editor*

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## LETTERS

### Euro Collapse

The September meeting of the Kent District Committee provided ample evidence that the Euro CPGB is in rapid disintegration as is not much longer for this world. There are supposed to be 12 members of the committee - but one recruit of 18 months standing has resigned because it is "all too much" for him. Of the remaining 11, six turned up.

Nina Temple was there as the representative of the Euro Executive Committee ... what a funny little ineffective, apolitical creature.

She gave a report which was all organisational, factual and devoid of politics. There were apparently 40 Euro CPGB members at this year's TUC, a dramatic decline on previous years. She said that the Euro fringe meeting attracted 60 people and £800 was collected for 7 Days. It needs it.

Temple admitted that the Euro CPGB was in deep crisis. *Marxism Today*'s circulation is declining. From a peak of 17,600 it is now down to just over 15,000. Financially it is losing £50,000 a year and 7 Days £30,000. Its circulation at a claimed 4,500 cannot go down much further before it collapses. And because membership was down to 7,500 dues and other like sources of finance are steadily drying up.

However due to the self sacrifice of the past the Euro's are "well endowed with capital resources", "better than any other party of similar size". To keep *Marxism Today* going the decision has been made to "redeploy capital", ie sell off the 'family silver'.

So Farleigh Press will be sold and their party centre will be relocated outside central London. Reflecting the dire financial state of the Euros Nina reported that it had been decided not to proceed with legal action in the bourgeois courts against the *Morning Star*'s CPB over the title of their mutual programme the *British Road to Socialism* because of "costs".

Given the dire state of their organisation no wonder the doyens of Eurocommunism are like rats deserting the sinking ship. Former National Organiser, Dave Cook, had enough and got on his bike and headed overland to Australia. Chris Myant, founder editor of 7 Days found better things to do, now Treasurer, Judith Gradwell's, gone, for "health reasons". Dave Green has dropped all pretence at being London District Secretary, even Tricia Davis resigned from the EC but was "persuaded to stay" after lengthy discussion. What a bunch of pathetics.

On the Euro congress itself, Nina said, there would be no debate on their *Manifesto for New Times* but discussion on "themes". Although she stressed the need to enter into the pre-Congress discussion only three Euro branches have bothered to hold meetings so far and no resolutions or amendments were presented to the District Committee.

Temple said the next Euro EC would discuss "relations" with other parties because of the "crisis in world communism" – could this be a prelude for going the way of the 'Communist Party' in Italy and openly declaring for social democracy and applying to join the Socialist International?

The response from the District Committee said it all. District Secretary, Mel Danvers announced he was going to resign! Why? Because

he is "unable to carry out his job". "Political work" is not getting done because he is working 12 to 14 hours a day at his carpet salesmen job. Committee members suggested that the secretaries job be shared out ... no one volunteered.

**Reg Weston**  
Member Kent CPGB District Committee

### Great Interest

We read the July 24 1989 issue of *The Leninist* with the greatest interest. We have received the paper for some time and have regarded it as a clear voice of revolutionary Marxism in a world nearly devoid of such voices.

Your estimate of the current situation and the tasks of revolutionaries has been very close to our understanding. We have tried on earlier occasions to get in contact with representatives of your organisation here in the United States. Our letters and request for information have never been answered. We are again attempting to establish some contact by responding to your call for revolutionary unity.

Enclosed is a sampling of our agitational and propagandist material. We would appreciate a reply directly from your London office if that is convenient. Unfortunately, some of the organisations associated with your USA representative have been extremely hostile to us. We have had to consider the possibility that they have prevented any contact thus far.

Wishing you success in your struggle,  
**Nelson Perry**  
Chairman, Central Committee  
Communist Labour Party of the  
United States of North America

**David Sherriff replies:**  
We have written to the comrades of the CLP welcoming discussions between our two organisations. However we have also informed them that the individual(s) who apparently purport to represent *The Leninist* in the USA have no right to do so and should be ignored.

### Hands Off Ireland!

Alan Merrik ('Internationalism and Revolution' *The Leninist* No82) portrays Hands Off Ireland! as integral to the process of building a Communist Party.

This poses some problems. Firstly, this is not quite the same as the work that was done to build the HOI! contingent on 'Time To Go' which was based on the two demands Troops Out Now and Self Determination. While most of those involved recognise the significance of these demands for the liberation of both Irish and British workers this is not the same as premising a commitment to HOI! on building a particular type of party. While debate on these questions is welcome, the main thrust of HOI! itself is to confront the disastrous reformist 'withdrawalist' movement and its neocolonial implications.

Secondly, we are in a somewhat different situation from the early days of the CPGB, which was formed under the impact of the October Revolution, which showed what a Bolshevik type

party could achieve. The groups that united in 1921 transcended the factionalism of their earlier years and set about the revolutionary tasks in hand. Today we do not have a Communist Party, only rival groups with different conceptions about what such a party should be. We cannot simply leap over 70 years of history and launch a new Communist Party as if oblivious to the schisms in the communist movement from the Left Opposition onwards.

HOI! should provide the means for groups supporting the two demands to unite in practice to challenge reformism. Through generating a common body of experience perhaps a more favourable climate will emerge for 'party building', but we should not preempt this.

**Mark Marston**  
Sheffield

### Pigs off the Farm!

Lots of people on the left are slating the police raid on the Broadwater Farm estate. A range of community leaders, police committee members and Labourites have proclaimed against the Met. The reasons for the dissatisfaction is, we are told, because the crime rate is down, and consequently such a raid was 'unnecessary'. Others argue that the degree of force used was 'excessive'.

That is why it was timely that in the last edition of *The Leninist* you warned that the drug scare has "been used in an overtly racist way, with the black community lined up as harbourers of drug dealers". As if on cue, the Met stormed in just a few days later. It's not the first time and it certainly won't be the last.

Until our class rejects capitalism's hysterical propaganda campaigns it will always be prey to the consequences of this: repression of all workers. However well intentioned, left wingers who are horrified by the consequences of the drug raids but accept the legitimacy of the state's drug scares are one of the major blocks on breaking the ideological chains of our rulers' lies.

**Kevin French**  
London

### McColl

The Workers Theatre Movement deeply regrets the recent death of its Honorary President, Ewan McColl.

I interviewed him just two weeks ago and his commitment and belief in agitprop as the theatrical weapon for the working class was a great inspiration. His death deepens the resolve of the WTM to take up the weapon which this formidable human being helped to forge.

**Tom Cormack**  
Workers Theatre Movement

**Note:** Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

### WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.

# Kinnock's conference

**The combination of a right moving Labour leadership and the increased combativity over the recent period presents communists with real opportunities**

MIGEL Lawson's trials and tribulations have been accompanied by a further revival in the fortunes of the Labour Party. The waffley and vacuous Neil Kinnock has almost become flavour of the month with the bourgeoisie. Ever eager to jump on the latest bandwagon *Marxism Today* announced "the end of Thatcherism", with all the fervour and intellectual shallowness that led it to insist that "Labour can't win" such a short time ago.

Kinnock's speech at Blackpool – which was mindnumbingly dull – was praised as "prime-ministerial" by the bourgeoisie media. His party is now riding high in the opinion polls with predictions being made as to what the Labour majority would be if there was to be an election 'tomorrow'. But then, as we know, tomorrow never comes ...

Not for a long time has Labour been seen to be such a respectable bourgeois alternative party of government. Consequently, that hoary old wait till "the next Labour government" excuse for inaction has once more sprung to the lips of many on the left after a welcome absence of over two years.

What, then, are the prospects of the Labour Party? The Labour left has been well trounced at the conference, with Ken Livingstone being ousted from the National Executive Committee. Even the most neurotic Wapping hacks, who before warned of the dark forces of Benn, Livingstone or whoever waiting to pounce and seize the leadership as soon as Kinnock changed curtains in Number 10 have been silenced by this.

There has been a pronounced demoralisation on the Labour left. Seldom has it seemed so dispirited and directionless. After getting the boot 'Red Ken' made an appeal for the troops to keep their heads down, stating that Kinnock's speech was one "the whole party can unite around". Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn seem to be putting a more resilient and pugnacious face on things. Benn emphasises, in *British Road* style, the importance of extra-parliamentary struggle: "We have to show solidarity with workers in struggle. We are not a parliamentary faction – we are a party of the labour movement" (quoted in *Socialist Worker* October 14). Both have tried to turn a defeat into victory by emphasising the meaningless 'gains' made on the periphery of the defence debate.

This indicates the schizophrenic nature of the Labour left. It retains its base in the working class by lending support to their struggles, in particular the economic struggles of the trade unions. Rather than giving even these limited struggles an independent lead, they must instead channel these energies into electoralism and the confines of the Labour Party. By definition, then, the Labour left is



Proving to the bosses his party will support them as well as the Tories

loyal above all else to the Labour Party: hence (aside from personal career ambitions) Livingstone's reaction. Don't rock the boat.

Realistically, though, what are Kinnock's chances of forming his promised (threatened?) Labour government in a couple of years time? It will take far more than nice packaging, a trouble free conference and a defeated and subservient left. Given the concrete conditions the Tories are still by far the best equipped to carry out capital's assault against the working class. Labour's popularity has far more to do with the current problems within the Tory party resulting from Britain's ailing economy.

Our analysis of the Labour Party is that it has returned to being the party of crisis it was between World War I and World War II. It is certainly not the natural party of government. Harold Wilson claimed it to be in the 1970s. This does not mean that the Labour Party has lost its importance, that it has 'died', or that it can never form a government again. Of course not. Faced by a wave of militant class struggle or a preferred party of government which has made a right hash of things the ruling class will look to its Labour auxiliaries.

Contradictions within the Conservative Party are certainly mounting; the economic renaissance has proved all too hollow, the Poll Tax, water privatisation, marketisation of the NHS have all left the government deeply unpopular. But as yet this has not created any profound crisis. It is premature in the extreme to predict the fall of the Tories or to herald 'the next Labour government' – even where it worth heralding, which it is not.

The rising tide of militancy has not reached such a level where parachuting in a Labour administration in an attempt to head it off is at all necessary. If it was, Neil Kinnock would hardly putting himself forward as a good Thatcherite. He – or a left replacement –

would have to make good, left and fiery speeches to rein in workers' militancy. This Labour is neither willing, capable nor called on to do at the moment.

So we would still argue that neither the state of the class struggle nor the internal strife of the Tories warrants the imposition of a Labour crisis government. This is not to say that the state of play could not change within over the next two years. But, as the cliché goes, one swallow doesn't make a spring. And even if Labour were to get in, this would be no springtime for the working class, anymore than the anti-proletarian 'winter of discontent' Callaghan administration. The working class should have no illusions in any 'next Labour government'.

There is a real prospect that many militants will be forced to break with Labourism to defend even the most basic needs of the working class. The Labour left will no doubt attempt to keep them in behind Kinnock, but, given that they are more marginalised than ever within a increasingly sanitised party, their influence will be at a lower ebb than previously.

The overt pro-capitalism of the Labour leaders and the relative paralysis of the likes of Benn at the moment provide us with the theoretical and practical ammunition to break militants from the hold of reformism despite the cant of not spoiling Kinnock's chances. While the Labour left and the various Trotskyist entrants wade about in the CLPs trying to piece together something out of their defeat we must put forward a strong revolutionary alternative, in the workplaces and on the streets.

The Labour conference proves, if further proof were needed, that the Labour Party has nothing to offer the working class. It is a bourgeois party of the working class *against* the working class. Partisans of the working class must fight it and build through struggle a genuine workers' party – a Communist Party.

Alan Merrik

## Preparations for the annual Manchester Martyrs

Commemoration march are now well in hand. This year sees the 122nd anniversary of the hanging of three Irish men by the British state. William Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien were executed at New Bailey gaol for the 'murder' of a policeman during a successful bid to release Colonel Kelly and Captain Deasy, both members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. After a brief gap, the march was relaunched in 1981 and has since grown to be one of the most important demonstrations in solidarity with the struggle of the Irish people. In recent years, the march organisers have come under increasing attack for their principled position of inviting both representatives of Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Socialist Party to address the rally which follows the march. In Britain, this pressure has been coordinated by elements who believe it the job of 'solidarity' organisations to uncritically tail Sinn Fein. And in Ireland, of course, SF is trying to marginalise and destroy the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Despite this pressure, the committee has upheld this policy again this year. Hands Off Ireland! has pledged support for the march. This year's Manchester Martyrs Commemoration march starts at 12.30pm, Longsight Market, Dickenson Road in Manchester, on November 26. For details of transport to the march, contact HOI!, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, tel: 01 431 3135. IM

**The struggle** to reduce the working week from 39 to 35 hours with no loss of pay by the country's 800,000 engineering workers is of the utmost significance, not only for those workers who will benefit directly, but for the working class as a whole. This demand, together with those for extra holidays and cuts in overtime, will not lead to job losses, as the bosses Engineering Employers Federation claims. The employers, whose order books are bulging at present, will be forced to take on more workers if they want to deliver to their customers and not invoke crippling penalty clauses. Every reduction in unemployment weakens the bosses and strengthens the bargaining power of the working class. That is why the Unemployed Workers Charter is organising street collections to raise money for the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions' national weekly levy to support the 24,000 selected workers it is bringing out. This unity of unemployed and employed workers is of great symbolic importance and should be supported by all. The UWC plans to raise at least £125 per week which is what one engineering worker will receive in strike pay. Readers wishing to help in this task can donate directly to the UWC or order UWC petition sheets from BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. IF

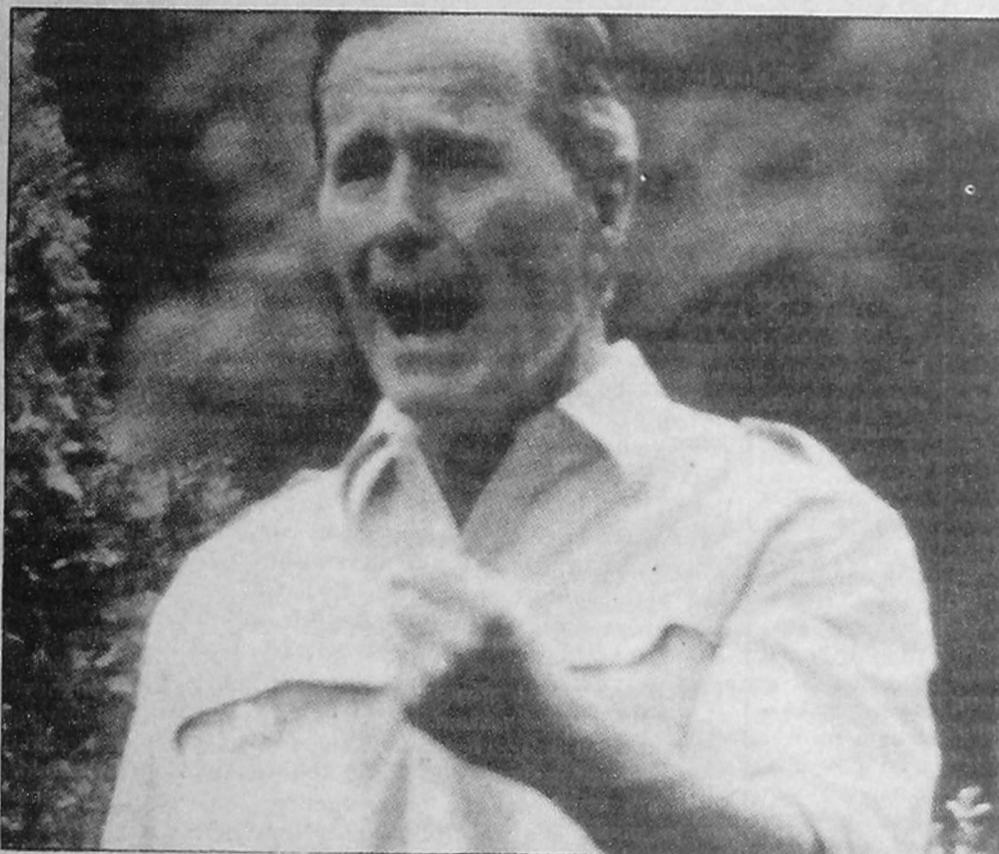
**The Workers Theatre Movement** held its first Annual General Meeting on Saturday October 7. The proceedings were opened with a short written message from Ewan MacColl, Honorary President of the WTM, followed by Tom Cormack, who gave the keynote speech to the meeting. "Last year", the comrade said, "had been a dress rehearsal". Nonetheless, as comrade Cormack noted, the WTM has begun to develop its immense potential. It has performed to audiences totalling some 10,000, and has begun to make valuable contacts and dig its roots in the working class movement, with pieces like *Dockers 89*. After initially concentrating on learning scripts performed in the 1930s, of particular significance has been the writing of new pieces dealing with the politics of our day. But again, as comrade Cormack noted, this was only a beginning. Following solidarity greetings from the CPSA (DOE Westminster Branch) and the Union of Turkish Progressives, the meeting discussed two motions on the agenda, the Manifesto of the WTM and the formation of a six strong steering committee. After a full debate the motions were overwhelmingly carried. The meeting finished with an appeal from the secretary for members to redouble their use of theatre as a weapon in the class struggle for socialism and revolution. PH

## Good fund



Our £600 monthly fighting fund went over the top – at last – in September, by £40, and so far this month things don't look at all bad with £370 in. Of course, there is no room for complacency. We are still relying far too much on the occasional large donation rather than regular systematic collections. This is very important. Our press continues because of its readers. We have no rich backers, we have no 'family silver' to sell and we refuse to prostitute ourselves any socialist country, let alone a capitalist government in the so-called Third World. We would like to take this opportunity to thank comrades AR in Scotland and MR in London for the £100 cheques, as well as other comrades who have given so generously. Keep up the good work.

# Peace in our time?



Bush won't put 'universal human values' before profit

**Gorbachev's  
appeasement of  
imperialism has been  
acclaimed by all  
shades of bourgeois  
opinion, from  
Margaret Thatcher to  
Martin Jacques, as  
bringing peace to the  
world. Nothing could  
be further from the  
truth. The danger of a  
World War III is  
increasing. If we are to  
prevent it there are  
no room for pacifistic  
illusions**

**Y**EAT AGAIN peace and disarmament talks between the Soviet Union and the United States are making headlines throughout the world. Hypocrisy abounds. In preparation for the coming US/Soviet summit George Bush, speaking to the United Nations, announced his 'desire' to do a deal to drastically cut the stocks of chemical weapons held by USSR and USA.

But such 'disarmament' is an illusion. The US is developing one new weapon system after another. So while Edward Shevardnadze, Soviet foreign minister, responded to Bush by saying, he was prepared to abolish chemical weapons altogether, the US presses ahead with its Star Wars programme, unveils its radar avoiding bat-like Stealth Bomber and deploys more and more of its first strike MX and Trident missiles.

Frankly the Soviet Union is appeasing imperialism. As an indication of this it has already conceded to US demands for the dismantling of its radar station at Krasnoyarsk in Siberia and dropped its previous insistence that the United States halts its Star Wars programme before it disarms further.

We accept that peaceful coexistence can be a necessary tactic for defending and consolidating living socialism. Yet this is not an absolute and we must approach the question concretely; above all in the context of the counterrevolutionary line of Gorbachev and the social democratic ideas that he is using to justify his politics internally and externally.

For Gorbachev peaceful coexistence is a code word for working hand in glove with imperialism. He is not retreating before

imperialism for tactical reasons, so that socialism can in due time again go forward, as Lenin did with the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Instead Gorbachev is seeking to bury all vestiges of the principles of Marxist-Leninist theory so as to facilitate the Soviet Union's full integration into the world economy and the technocracy's transformation into a new capitalist class.

Naturally Gorbachev and the 'official world communist movement' do not admit that their belief that nuclear weapons have changed the nature of war and that a lasting peace can be secured whilst imperialism still exists is a cover for class treachery. To do so would be to commit political suicide. Instead the 'official communists' put peace as the supreme aim onto a utopian pedestal and divorce it from class society and the class struggle.

In line with this in place of their old claim that the world balance of forces has 'shifted decisively in favour of socialism' they now talk about the world balance of forces are in favour of peaceful coexistence (see the CPB's draft version of the *British Road to Socialism*). This is a shabby device to avoid admitting the relative decline of the Soviet Union and the general crisis that has developed in the socialist world. For the fact of the matter is that this pulls the rug from under the feet of 'official communism's' claim that the counterfeit world balance in favour of socialism justified their parliamentary road to socialism.

Because of the growing socio-economic crisis in the USSR the USA has been able to force upon Gorbachev all sorts of unequal treaties and claim that the west is just about to win the Cold War. Far from reducing the threat of a World War III such a development greatly increases it. The disintegration of existing bureaucratic socialism will produce a scramble for the east and lift the lid on the simmering contradictions between the crystallising new imperialist blocs; Japan, USA and a German dominated EC. We only need to recall that the two world wars that have devastated our planet this century had their origins, not in the contradiction between socialism and capitalism, but within capitalism itself to appreciate the significance of that.

Understandably large numbers of people put their faith in superpower diplomacy and the hope that good sense will prevail. Many who call themselves communists or socialists fall into the same trap or turn to the SOS pacifism of CND. So before we go on to look at the prospect of war at the moment, it is important to look at war and what lies behind the drive to war.

Regular readers of this paper will be only to familiar with the formula put forward by the Prussian soldier-philosopher Clausewitz, that war is "an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will ... a duel on an extensive scale" and more importantly "a continuation of policy by other means" (*On War*). Marx Engels and Lenin took Clausewitz's definition and developed it to show that war is a product of class society, and it will only disappear with the disappearance of class

society. For Lenin "all wars are inseparable from the political systems that engender them. The policy which a given state, a given class within a state, pursued for along time before the war is inevitably continued by that same class during the war, the form of action alone, being changed." (CW Vol 24 p400)

War was not part of primitive communism. That form of society did not have the resources to conduct violence on an extended scale. To carry out that what was required was a surplus to raise and sustain an army; under primitive communism that was impossible. For war to become a feature of human society the productive forces had to advance beyond the hand to mouth existence of our primitive ancestors.

When private ownership started to replace primitive communism society began to experience the immense advantages bestowed by the existence of surplus production. But along with writing, cities and irrigated agriculture it also experienced the curse of war.

With the emergence of class society out of the womb of primitive communism came the state - "armed bodies of men" - to defend and act, in the interests of the ruling class which kept the still relatively tiny surplus to itself. These armed bodies - sustained from society's surplus - made war possible and inevitable. War not only enabled the ruling class to control the oppressed masses of its own state, but also gave it the ability to increase its power, by defeating the ruling class of other states, thus accruing more territories, booty and slaves and thus reinforcing its position.

Wars have been a feature of all class societies. However, capitalism with its massive productive potential and its creation of the world market, has meant wars are now fought on a scale unimaginative to Saladin, Alexander, Caesar, Ghengis Khan or Hanable. Already as mentioned above inter-capitalist contradictions have resulted in two world wars, in which 70 million people were killed. Now the development of nuclear armaments since 1945 means that capitalism puts into question the very continuation of our species on this planet.

## Gorbachevite pacifism

The development and the quantum build up of nuclear weapons has posed point blank what attitude communists should have to war and peace. On the one hand Leninists maintain that nuclear weapons do not change the basic Marxist understanding of war and that indeed their horrifyingly destructive power reinforces the necessity for communists to give their all to the struggle for socialist revolution.

As we have said in the above section of this article others take a very different position. The most authoritative is Mikhail Gorbachev and his writings and speeches on the subject; he says "nuclear war cannot be a means of

**achieving political, economic, ideological or any other goals**" (*Perestroika* p140). Gorbachev's position has been adopted by the CPSU and is "the fundamental principle of the new political outlook". (We will deal with the full significance of this later.)

For Gorbachev "**Clausewitz's dictum that war is the continuation of policy only by other means, which was classical in its time, has grown hopelessly out of date. It now belongs to the libraries.**" (*Perestroika* p141). Let us be quite clear what Gorbachev is saying here. All war, not just nuclear war, must be divorced from class politics. By leaving Clausewitz in the libraries, Gorbachev consciously rabbishes Marx, Engels and Lenin and replaces their scientific world view with hopelessly out of date pacifism.

Hence for him "**basing international policies on moral and ethical norms that are common to all humankind**" which were "**a utopian dream**" are now "**a vital requirement**". To justify this Gorbachev has to in effect maintain that the development of nuclear weapons has replaced the class struggle as the locomotive of historical development. It is on this basis Gorbachev proposes a utopian dream of permanent collaboration with imperialism.

Yet everything we know about society and its movement tells us that the source and danger of war still comes from the contradictions within capitalism. Nuclear war – even if it resulted in many hundreds of millions of deaths – would still be the continuation of capitalist politics. What other way can the very real danger of it be understood?

'Official communism's' claim that war today is literally madness ignores the lessons of world history, the perfectly rational and meticulous war plans made by US generals and politicians and ends up in the anti-scientific mire of putting down war to potty training, male ego or somesuch quasi Freudian nonsense.

Imperialism's nature means that unless we stop it, it is inevitable that it will eventually go to war in an attempt to resolve the contradictions within it caused by the uneven development of its various blocs. As we said in *The Leninist* No7 imperialism's "**drives, especially for capital accumulation, necessitate the export of capital, necessitate the off-loading of crisis onto rivals, necessitate expansionism, and where this cannot be done by peaceful methods, war is always looked to.**" This remains all too true. So in spite of the pacifistic hype coming from US/Soviet summits and claims of the universal triumph of liberal capitalism it is essential for communists to have a correct ideological position.

Genuine communism has nothing to do with pacifism. We do not renounce violence. Historically in the last analysis we support the wars conducted by progressive classes and oppressed nations, not only because of revolutionary solidarity, but because they aim to remove the fetters which prevent the forces of production advancing. That is the main criteria used by communists to determine whether a war is just or not.

Hence in his day Marx looked upon the wars conducted by revolutionary France, even when it was under the leadership of Bonapart, as progressive. Certainly he supported those European countries which were prepared to stand up to Tsarist Russia simply because throughout the 19th century it was a bulwark of reaction. Yet while Marx was quite correct to favour one major capitalist power against another with the development of imperialism capitalism became moribund. Under such conditions, as Lenin argued, communists had to argue for revolutionary defeatism of their 'own' great nation and prepare for socialist revolution.

While imperialism can dramatically advance the forces of production in this or that sphere it has come to represent a *relative fetter* in comparison to what would be possible under the socialist order. More, that the next general crisis of capitalism will dwarf the last one which included the 1929 crash and spanned the years 1914-48 and caused two world wars means that it represents an *absolute fetter* and an *absolute danger* to what exists. Therefore all wars carried out by imperialist powers are now reactionary and thus unjust.

The uneven rate of development of states, under imperialism, has meant that the contradictions within capitalism have heightened to such a point that the 'epoch of wars' was born. Imperialism's possession of nuclear weapons has not changed this. In fact it only goes to confirm it. Gorbachev's claim that the nature of nuclear weapons puts them above the class struggle is patently absurd. Nuclear weapons have not replaced class society or the class

struggle. Nor could they. Nuclear weapons are tools used within class society (used to kill millions or used as a blackmail device).

The ABC of class politics tells us that nuclear weapons, in a socialist state, are a necessary evil to defend the gains represented by that state, whereas imperialist nuclear weapons are reactionary because they are weapons of a reactionary social and economic system.

### Class weapon

To prove our point I will look at the different role nuclear weapons have in the capitalist and socialist systems. The authors Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod uncovered for their book, *To Win a Nuclear War*, some very informative documents, released under the Freedom of Information Act, giving a from the horses mouth account of US nuclear strategy.

As shown in previously top secret documents ever since the US produced the first atomic bombs, its plutocratic presidents have considered and implicitly and explicitly threatened first use of nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union. It is well known that during the so-called Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy threatened to nuke the Soviet Union unless it removed nuclear weapons. But there are many other less known examples of US nuclear blackmail such as over Iran in 1945, Berlin 1948 and Korea in 1950. With such evidence who can doubt that in this way imperialism has used the threat of nuclear war as a continuation of its politics by other (potentially very violent) means?

Kaku and Axelrod identify three distinct periods in US strategy since 1945:

1. Massive pre-emption (1945-1960); where the US strove to win a World War III through a massive first strike against Soviet cities and industrial centres. Under the rubric of sickening descriptive war plans like 'Bushwacker', 'Sizzle' and 'Frolic' the Soviet Union would be crippled by wiping out selected of targets (ranging from a mere two in December 1945 to 3,261 in 1957), conquered and then dismembered into a set of tame US neo-colonies. The fly in the ointment was the fact that the Soviet Union developed its own bomb. It could, even after suffering a devastating first strike, launch a retaliatory attack in which, according to the Pentagon, some 20 million US citizens would die. It could also overrun Western Europe using the mighty Red Army. Only because of these two factors did the US hold its hand.
2. Mutually Assured Destruction (1961-1974); at this stage USSR closed the gap in nuclear terror. There was something like a balance in nuclear weapons. This made a US attack on the USSR an unviable political option.
3. Counterforce (1975- ); this is a new first strike strategy. President Carter commissioned the building of super accurate weapons, such as Trident and the MX. These are first strike weapons designed to wipe out the Soviet leadership in its bunkers and its missiles in their silos (therefore blunting any Soviet second strike). However the deterrent still existed. Some Soviet weapons were bound to be launched and this would inflict intolerable levels of destruction on the USA. This is where Regan's Star Wars (SDI) came in.

The aim of SDI is to complement the first strike capacity of US weaponry with a defensive 'shield' that could significantly reduce the impact of any counter-attack. Although at present the US has admitted having difficulties with its development of Star Wars, it can only be a matter of time before, the technology is available for such a project to be operational in some form.

With such a shield and sword combination, US imperialism hopes it could launch and survive a future nuclear war. This position would enable the US to blackmail socialist states, in particular the Soviet Union, to force it to bend to its demands or face certain destruction in a war which the US would emerge relatively undevastated.

The Soviet Union's response to imperialism's war drive since 1945 has been to attempt to keep up. At great cost the Soviet Union has diverted a huge slice of its gross national product towards defence spending. Apart from the development of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), the USSR has always lagged behind USA in technological innovations, and that the same can be said of the quality, accuracy, and sophistication of their weapons. Nonetheless it achieved something like parity with US military capabilities under the now much maligned leader-

ship of Leonid Brezhnev. Considering the fact that US GNP is even now some two times bigger than the USSR's this great achievement was bound to be at a great price in terms of strain on the Soviet economy.

Now however bureaucratic socialism (not military spending) has run the Soviet Union into stagnation. As a result defence spending has become ever more burdensome, ever more costly in relative terms. Gorbachev does not think the Soviet Union can compete any longer.

With its decision to finance further research for Star Wars, the Pentagon is now responsible for record US defence spending. It can safely be said that if the USSR tried to match this it would lead to it becoming one of the most indebted states in the world. Considering the mismanagement and disintegration of the Soviet economy under Gorbachev he cannot afford the massive investment that would be needed for a Soviet Star Wars. The very deployment of such a system would bankrupt the Soviet Union, and even then it is possible that the technology could become obsolete very quickly with further US ratcheting up of the one sided arms race.

Some centrists privately say that the Soviet Union should keep up with imperialism on principle. This is nonsense. Communists must look at things in the concrete. It is not a principle for socialist states to match imperialism militarily. Instead we should be looking at what is possible and what is necessary. That combines the possibility of all sorts of compromises with imperialism with the singleminded goal of its complete destruction.

### Lenin on peaceful coexistence

At this point it is relevant to examine the tactic of peaceful coexistence, as developed by Lenin after the October Revolution, to see how Gorbachev has distorted this tactic and how genuine communists would use it.

Whilst acknowledging the great achievement of the Bolsheviks in 1917, Lenin quickly realised that capitalism would continue to dominate the world economic system for some time to come. He has been proved correct. It was therefore essential for the Soviet Union to survive in the period before the world balance of forces shifted decisively towards socialism. Hence the principled tactic of peaceful coexistence was born out of necessity. The young Soviet state needed to exploit the contradictions and frictions between the dominant imperialist states in order to survive.

In the immediate aftermath of October it was being attacked from the armies of imperialist intervention and at the same time, revolutions in Europe were being crushed, most importantly in Germany. Tactical diplomacy needed to be used to prevent the USSR going the same way. Lenin argued that the Soviet Union was so vulnerable that it had to make massive concessions to imperialism for its very survival. Hence the humiliating and costly Brest-Litovsk Treaty.

But what was needed was more than emergency measures. What was needed was a clearly worked out set of tactics. By using the greed for profit which propels capitalism, Lenin advocated the skilful playing of one imperialist off against another. By concluding favourable concessions and trade deals with certain capitalists, the possibility of a combined imperialist attack on living socialism could be reduced enabling the young socialist state to develop its economy. With increased economic strength a formidable army could be financed to dissuade potential attackers. By dividing the imperialists their drive for war, against socialism, could be held off.

Lenin, talking about the possible war between Japan and the United States, said that advocating "propaganda for communism in these countries" is "correct, but it is not everything." The US and Japan "want to fight and will fight for world supremacy, for the right to loot... Of course, defence of our country in such a war would be a heinous crime, a betrayal of socialism. Of course, to support one of these countries against another would be a crime against communism." But then he added "we communists have to play one off against another. Are we not committing a crime against communism? No, because we are doing that as a socialist state which is carrying on communist propaganda and is obliged to take advantage of every hour granted it by circumstances in order to gain strength as rapidly as possible." (CW Vol 31 p443)

So there is nothing wrong, in principle, with giving concessions, doing deals or appeasing imperialism if it preserves the world revolution-

ary centre – the Soviet Union. But as Lenin pointed out that there had to be a conscious separation between the tactical diplomacy of the socialist state in its interaction with capitalist states and the position of the world's communist parties. They should be to strike singlemindedly towards world revolution, and not to deviate from this goal. And even though socialist states might conclude diplomatic deals with capitalism this would not only be to protect existing themselves but so as to create bastions for the world revolution.

Hence it is essential to see peaceful coexistence as a tactic to be used only for so long as it takes to shift the world balance of forces and for workers in capitalist states to make their own revolutions. Seen in this way, peaceful coexistence is a principled tactic that can be used to aid the world revolution. Used by genuine communists it is a continuation of class struggle through other means – diplomacy.

However, like the use of parliamentary elections, work in reactionary trade unions or the publication of legal papers, peaceful coexistence can be used as a form of class collaborationism. If it is used to undermine living revolutions and to foster illusions in achieving permanent peace with imperialism this is certainly the case.

Peace under capitalism can only be temporary. Due to capitalism's nature, under the imperialist stage, the existing socialist states will always be threatened by imperialism's drive for markets, spheres of influence and eventually war. And socialism can be reversed as long as the world revolution is not completed. This is not a theoretical hypothesis. Hungary and Poland today prove it. Peaceful democratic counterrevolution from within is ill to real.

Peaceful coexistence is only a holding operation until socialism is made irreversible through the completion of the world revolution. Yet the 'official world communist movement', personified by Gorbachev, advocates putting off the struggle for revolutions in capitalist states and living revolutions till the 'principle' of permanent peaceful coexistence is achieved. Gorbachev says that revolution must be put off until world peace is achieved. That is like a couple putting off having sexual intercourse until their baby is born.

Whatever the superficial similarities the approach of Lenin and Gorbachev are fundamentally different. Lenin openly acknowledged his retreat in the face of capitalism. He sought to equip the Soviet working class to fight the inevitable negative effects, internally and externally, of this retreat. Gorbachev, on the other hand, insists we need to base "**international policies on moral and ethical norms that are common to all humankind, once a utopian dream, these are now a vital requirement.**"

He does not explain the Soviet predicament as being due to its isolation and economic backwardness. Instead he argues that the way forward is for socialism and capitalism to live together in permanent peace. He completely abandons Lenin's insistence that "**while capitalism and socialism exist side by side, they cannot live in peace; one or the other will ultimately triumph – the last obsequies will be observed either for the Soviet Republic or for world capitalism.**" (CW Vol 31, p457)

The existence of capitalist states, for Gorbachev, is no bad thing: "**the states and peoples of the earth are very different and it is actually good that they are so.**" He claims the world can achieve peace and plenty through permanent cooperation between socialism and capitalism. The class struggle, for him, is no longer the driving force of history. This is Gorbachev's idea of peaceful coexistence and the dialectical unity of opposites. Instead communists understand that capitalism and socialism are in a life and death struggle, in which it is historically inevitable and necessary that capitalism should be negated through revolution. Capitalism and socialism can live side by side temporarily, but not in permanent peace. In the long term one or the other will win.

For the Soviet Union to survive as a socialist state what is needed is a political revolution to make the bureaucracy the servant and not the master of socialism. Yet this is only part of the solution. It also needs the world revolution, in particular, it needs revolutions in advanced capitalist states. What will save the Soviet Union will also save the world. World revolution is the key to peace, a peace which because it is the natural and permanent order of things will see the word peace itself become obsolete simply because its opposite war has also become a distant memory.

Nick Ellis

&amp;

## UNEMPLOYMENT

## How to organise

The SWP has been enthusing on the Ireland: why Britain must get out? booklet by one of its leading members, Paul Foot. His Irish comrades in the SWP's fraternal organisation, the Socialist Workers Movement, it seems do not agree. A review in September's Irish Socialist Worker describes the pamphlet as assuming "that there is some progressive role to play in the run up to withdrawal." Another correspondent in October's edition goes further, describing Foot's tome as "a severe embarrassment" which sees "Britain as part of the solution rather than a major element of the problem." In other words, the SWM's comrades in Britain have penned and given support to a pro-imperialist pamphlet. It's about time that the SWP's members woke up to this fact and don't just leave it to their Irish comrades.

The Revolutionary Communist Party is still telling us that the Labour Party is "dead". However, Kinnock's party is a lively corpse if ever there was one, according to the RCP's own paper. October 13's *The Next Step* tells us that it is making a "comeback" (like *Elvis in the Sunday Sport?*). And there's more: "we cannot discount the possibility of the Labour Party getting elected". Verily, the dead shall rise. Given the recent Monty Python anniversary and the death of Graham Chapman, it is not so much biblical quotes which spring to mind but a certain old Python sketch. But, sadly, the Labour Party is no parrot and the RCP, while definitely surreal, really isn't that funny.

The October issue of the London District Euro CPGB Bulletin, Capital Communist is, it says, all "about growth". You could have fooled us. London combined with the Eastern District to swell attendance at its weekend school to six "of the newer" members, equaling the number of tutors! In Newham borough, three branches have joined forces in a new 29 strong branch which, because of its size (sic), recognises "the impossibility of us functioning as a unit of the party". The District's Labour Movement Committee is unable to mail a regular bulletin to its 350 labour movement contacts due to lack of funds, and for the full time staff the "financial summer abyss" threatens "our meagre wages (£26 net a day)". Membership is down from 1,414 in July 1988 to 1,233.

**The new Social Security Act raises again the necessity of organising the unemployed. But how to go about it?**



The politics and practice to defend our rights

**H**ARASSMENT of unemployed workers by the Tory government was further upped on Monday October 9 when the new Social Security Act came into force, with its intimidatory "actively seeking work" requirements. Under threat of losing their unemployment benefit, claimants now have to keep records of their job-hunting efforts each week showing the visits they have made to jobcentres or employment agencies, which newspapers they have consulted for job advertisements and provide copies of job applications made and replies received.

New claimants will be given a permitted period of between one and thirteen weeks to seek "their usual occupation and accustomed rate of pay", after which they may be directed to particular job interviews by the Employment Service. The right to reject a job offer because of low pay, inappropriate experience or training is removed, and travel time up to one hour each way can no longer be considered unacceptable. Refusal to attend an interview, or refusal to accept a job offer, will result in suspension of unemployment benefit for two weeks initially, and longer if no "improvement" occurs.

"All reasonable steps" must be taken to seek work, and one of the steps considered "reasonable" is to accept a place on a training scheme. This brings the infamous "work-for-dole" Employment Training scheme a step closer to being compulsory.

Having come to office through using the slogan "Get Britain Working", the Tories have been completely unable to halt Britain's long term decline. Hence instead of introducing measures to create real jobs they have turned to simply shifting the goals posts when it comes to who is and who is not unemployed. Besides all sorts of new measures to intimidate the unemployed there have been at

least 24 changes since 1979 in the criteria for being counted as unemployed.

The purpose of the new law is not simply a matter of electoral window dressing. If siding with the unemployment is not seen as an key issue by organised workers in the trade union movement, then the unemployed can be harassed into low paid jobs in competition with established low paid workers, or onto the "work-for-dole" ET scheme, with its high level of substitution for jobs with wages. To paraphrase Karl Marx wages and conditions are determined not by the hundred or so normally working inside a factory, but by the half dozen "work-for-your-dole" ET "trainees" who have just walked through the gate.

This latest attack on the unemployed, therefore, must be recognised as part of the preparation for the general attack on wages and conditions of all British workers which the ruling class needs in order to compete effectively with its rivals in increasingly difficult world economic conditions.

All the more invidious, then, has been the collaboration of the TUC General Council - ignoring the 1988 Congress policy - with the ET scheme, helping the Tories to isolate and attack the unemployed and undermine trade union strength. As Mark Fischer of the Unemployed Workers Chater pointed out in *The Leninist* No 77 (April 10 1988), "technically ET is a flop. Politically, however, it has been a runaway success. The Tories have succeeded in establishing the principle of work-for-dole not simply among wide swathes of 'public opinion', but also, crucially, with the TUC and the leadership of the Labour Party."

The idea that forcing unemployed people to work for their dole money is somehow helping them was fought for personally by Kinnock at last year's TUC, and has paved the way for another turn of the screw, the "actively seeking

work" requirements. So no faith can be placed in the Labour leadership siding with the unemployed. As to the 'next Labour government', if Kinnock got into No10 after the next general election he has made it crystal clear that he intends to 'make capitalism work' ... and of course, that means attacking the working class, just as the Tories have.

There are those however who are doomed to relive past mistakes. Those who dream, no matter what the evidence to the contrary, that the Labour Party could if it were equipped with something they call the Alternative Economic and Political Strategy make capitalism work so well it could be smoothly and peacefully transformed into socialism. This is the position of a decreasing circle of Labour leftists as well as Tony Chater, the *Morning Star*'s editor, and his CPB 'party'.

The fact of the matter is that capitalism cannot be made to work. The post war decades of 'relative full employment' were years of worldwide capitalist boom which gave way about 1969 to the present deteriorating pre-crisis phase in which mass unemployment has emerged again as a permanent feature. It cannot be removed by enlightened capitalist government, not even a "new type" of left Labour one. The outbreak of the crisis phase itself, with the massive destruction of capital necessary before expansion can be resumed, threatens us with a doubling, trebling or quadrupling of unemployment, along with the danger of fascism and war. This is what lies in store so long as capitalism is allowed to survive.

For *The Leninist*, the struggle to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain, a genuine Communist Party capable of uniting all sections of the working class around a revolutionary programme, is therefore the key to winning the right to work (at full trade union rates). And because we see the interconnection between the need to organise the unemployed and the struggle to reforge the Communists Party it was only natural that it was *The Leninist* which took the lead in launching the Unemployed Workers Charter in 1986 to campaign for the organisation of unemployed workers.

While sincere and honest militants have applauded this initiative it has caused all sorts of problems for the 'official communists' of the *Morning Star* and its CPB 'party'. In spite of its faith in the Labour Party and the utopian AEPS it has a schizophrenic attitude to the question of unemployed organisation.

The CPB however incorrectly and nauseatingly calls itself communist. The launch of the UWC and the inspiration it draws from the communist led National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1920s and 30s was in stark contrast to their own reformist betrayal of that fine tradition. So in an not to lose all credibility the *Morning Star* has carried the occasional article

(usually by Jim Arnison) in with bold headlines proclaiming the need for unemployed organisation.

Unfortunately in true reformist style the content is rather different to the packaging. A particularly sickening example of this could be seen on Monday October 9 when the paper carried the front page headline: "Organise the jobless call", followed by reports of a "historic decision" by the Northern Regional TUC marking "a major step toward nation-wide trade union organisation for unemployed workers".

The truth will out. The resolution actually only called for "the formation of TUC holding sections for all unemployed workers". The article did not go into details but we can be sure it does not mean unemployed workers should have their own independent national organisation, as other workers do. Nor does it mean they should be allowed to elect their own recallable officials, let alone take up explicitly anti-capitalist politics (all of which the UWC calls for).

The Northern Regional TUC has not just voted to take up the cudgels of class war. Beneath the rhetoric what it actually wants to safeguard the TUC's 'tea and ping pong' unemployed centres through creating yet another monstrous bureaucratic talking shop.

Concretely what it proposes is a "national coordinating committee" made up of members of the TUC general council, the TUC Employment Policy and Organisation Committee, TUC officers and representatives from every Regional TUC. All this is a far cry from the UWC's demand for a National Unemployed Workers Movement which would be run by and based on the unemployed themselves and represented on the TUC general council in its own right - as other sections of workers are through their unions.

The TUC's unemployed centres are in present hands worthless. In reality they have more do with giving second rate local bureaucrats cushy jobs than mobilising the unemployed. Too hard? No, listen to what Terry Stevens, one time organiser of unemployed centres for the South East Region TUC had to say in the Spring 1988 edition of *Communist Campaign Review*:

"Very few unemployed centres have ever made contact with more than one percent of the unemployed in their locality, and it does not matter how much some people would like to juggle the figures, the evidence shows that very few unemployed centres are able, in a serious way, to mobilise the unemployed. In Greater London at the time of the GLC there were sixteen unemployed centres with 430,000 unemployed, yet at no time, despite strenuous efforts (I am assured), could these centres mobilise more than three hundred people on a demonstration of any kind."

Straight from the horses mouth, so to speak.

Organising the unemployed is no easy job. It needs the backing of the trade union movement but it cannot be done by helping petty bureaucrats to maintain their petty empires. What is needed is a campaigning organisation which fights capitalism no matter who is running it (Tory, Labour or whatever). Only the Unemployed Workers Charter points the way forward.

Stan Kelsey\$

Annual individual UWC membership (£5 waged/£2 unwaged). Annual affiliation for organisations (£100 national/£25 local). Send to UWC, Box 928, London WC1 3XX

## REVIEWS

### Stillbirth

Communist Party of Britain, *Communist Review*, Summer 1989, pp32, £1

Communist Party of Britain, Pre-Congress Discussion No1, pp12, no charge (send SAE to CPB, 3 Victoria Chambers, Luke Street, EC2A 4EE)

EIGHTEEN MONTHS after the stillbirth of its 'Reestablishment Congress' in April 1988 the part timers of the CPB are showing no signs of life as any sort of a communist organisation. Search as you may through the pages of its "summer" edition of its "theoretical and discussion journal" (which came out in September!) or the five (!) 800 word (!) contributions to its pre-congress discussion, you will find reformist platitudes but not a trace of communist clarity, let alone an honest attempt to face up to the task of making revolution.

From an inauspicious start, discussion in *Communist Review* is at an all time low, with only one article approaching what could be called a polemic, this being by joint editor, Ron Bellamy, concerning the definition of the working class. In fact all the articles are from the same tired old stable, apart from Bellamy we are treated to stale, often rehashed *Morning Star* pieces, from Tony Chater, Isolda MacNeil, Richard Maybin and Mary Davis ... and if further evidence was needed as to the true state of the CPB it is worth noting that there is a complete absence of letters. All this hardly squares with the claim that this 'party' has "begun to rebuild roots in the organised working class" and "to grow" (CR editorial).

That does not mean nothing is going on in the CPB. Only that what is going on is negative. "During ... the formation of the CPB, the policy of the leading committees was to keep controversial debate to the minimum. Critical discussion of our programme was kept out of the CCG Review", complains Mike Martin in *Pre-Congress Discussion*. This stifling of debate is continuing in the run up to its November congress. Instead of pre-congress discussion of its draft *British Road to Socialism* programme being published in its "discussion journal", it has to be sent for separately, but *Communist Review* does not mention this little fact to its readers.

Martin Levy's proposal to "propagate the draft, and to open up discussion of it, in the broad labour and progressive movement" fell on the deaf ears of the CPB's 'official communist' leaders. If you really want open discussion, Martin, you are in the wrong organisation!

*Communist Review* has its head firmly in the sand. While hiding in the comfort of its pages, readers can forget all about Tiananmen Square, the restoration of capitalism in Poland and Hungary, the exodus of thousands of Turks from socialist Bulgaria and strikes against perestroika by Soviet miners. These burning questions do not get a single mention! For the CPB, the general crisis of living socialism does not exist. Nor does the necessity for a genuine Communist Party if British imperialism is to be overthrown. Instead *Communist Review* dreams of achieving socialism through the imperialist Labour Party.

Richard Maybin, explaining "where the Poll Tax fits in" to Tory strategy, is dismayed that: "The ruling class sees the local councils, or indeed such bodies as local health authorities, as local

agents of the state." So do we, comrade.

Quite rightly, Maybin sees the Poll Tax as part of the turning of the screw, to "reduce the social wage of workers in order to maximise profit" and identifies the state's need to "crush effective trade unionism", especially "breaking up the 'monopoly' power of public service trade unions". But like a true reformist the anti-Poll Tax campaign only finds meaning for him in terms of the 'next general election', as "an essential part of the democratic push to get rid of the Tories and Tory policies."

It is apt therefore that Tony Chater's lead article goes under the banner of "Repeating past mistakes". He claims that Labour's policy review is "flawed by the way it sees collaboration with capital as the basis of its strategy ... This approach has characterised every Labour government since the war."

By pretending the Labour Party can become a vehicle for socialism, Tony Chater is simply "repeating past mistakes". Resistance to the "inroads into capitalist wealth and power" which will be made by the reformist 'Alternative Economic and Political Strategy', he believes, will require "mass extra-parliamentary activity". But instead of finding the indispensable role of a Communist Party here, as used to be customary in *Morning Star* circles, Tony sees only the "crucial role of the trade unions in mobilising the struggle". Truly, Tony Chater does not believe in the CPB, and it is only a matter of time before he dispenses with it.

Ian Farrell

### Iran's official communists

Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*), Social democratic transformation of the Tudeh spectrum, pp15, £1; available from BM Rahe Kargar, London WC1N 3XX or *The Leninist*

THE WHITE heat of the 1979 Iranian revolution strained every sinew of the Iranian revolutionary movement. It put their theories to the harshest test. This pamphlet represents an effective critique of the 'official communists' of the Tudeh Party and Fadaai Majority, who effectively betrayed the revolution, by an organisation which was forged in that revolutionary furnace, the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran.

In Britain we have seen our 'official communists', whether they be CPB, NCP or Euro, defend every twist and turn of what this pamphlet terms 'the Tudeh spectrum'. That so called communists here do this makes study of this question of far more than of academic interest for us. The struggle of the working class is international.

ORWI's pamphlet illustrates this well, taking as its analytical starting point the programme of Tudeh, which it correctly points out has much in common with social democracy: "denial of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat ... The separation of socialism from the idea of proletarian social revolution ... The negation of a scientific understanding of the state as an organisation of class violence ... analysis of the class struggle which looks inherently to peaceful and parliamentary means" is how the

pamphlet characterises the programmatic conclusions of the Tudeh spectrum. This, of course, is found in varying degrees in the programmes of the 'official communists', and the criticisms directed against Tudeh here are true for all too many other parties. Tudeh provides a case study of this programme in practice.

Classical social democracy, as with the Tudeh programme, looks to a strategic alliance with the liberal, non monopoly bourgeoisie. When tested in revolution the line-up was somewhat different: "What is interesting is that the Tudeh spectrum has in practice thrown aside its bloc with the liberal bourgeoisie, in favour of forming a bloc with the most reactionary sections [ie. Khomeini and the mullahs: AM] against even the most superficial democratisation in politics. Why?" (p7)

The answer to this, argues the pamphlet, is to be found in the contradictory stagist formulations of Tudeh: that of looking for a vehicle for its 'national democratic revolution' divorced from social revolution. The Tudeh spectrum's programme posits nationalisation of capital and isolation from the world market. While this has nothing to do with socialism, it also has little in common with the interests of the liberal bourgeoisie, who will want to defend their private appropriation of capital and greater integration in the world market, albeit at more advantageous terms. Therefore this brings about a reliance "on those reactionary, backward and anarchistic tendencies in the petty bourgeoisie against concentration and big capital" (p9), in this case the bazaar and especially the mullahs.

Today the progression of this line to an overtly social democratic one is accelerated by growing 'national' confidence of sections of the bourgeoisie, who place a greater emphasis on independent national development, and a change in the international line-up; in particular the effect of Gorbachev's mortgaging of revolutions on a world scale and his counterposing of "universal human values" against class struggle and revolution. This creates the basis for the Tudeh spectrum's "transformation to social democracy ... without any need to cut the umbilical cord with the CPSU or to lose their traditional role in fitting in with the global diplomacy of the Soviet Union." (p14) The "increasing prominence of the proletariat in the Iranian revolution" will therefore daily bring this bloc, should it be able to complete this transformation, into direct confrontation with the interests of the working class.

"The development of the class war has forced the Tudeh spectrum to stand on a platform which suites it, call itself by its rightful name, and gradually lay aside the mish-mash it gave out under such titles as 'socialist orientation', 'the non capitalist road to socialism', and the 'world hegemony of the proletariat', and lay bare its social democratic programme." (p15).

The fact that Iran is a crisis ridden medium developed capitalist country, however, bars the road to any social democratic middle ground. Social democracy can lead only directly lead to counterrevolution, as did Tudeh's 'Imam line' in the late '70s to early '80s. The forging of a mass Communist Party is necessary to prevent another tragic crushing of the working class struggle for power. It was absent in 1979: in exposing Tudeh's complicity in this and reasserting basic Marxist-Leninist principles this short pamphlet indicates the way forward.

Alan Merrick

## ACTION

### The Leninist

London Seminars, 5pm Sundays. Details: 01 431 3135.

Current series:

- Green Politics: October 22, What are Green politics? Who are the Greens? October 29, Do capitalist and Green politics mix? Ecology and the drive for profit. November 12, Why do the socialist countries have such an awful ecological record? November 26, Can the planet cope with ever expanding production? Is communism ecologically possible?

**Iran and Revolution:** London public meeting, with speaker from the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*) and video. Wednesday November 15, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road. Nearest tube, Euston.

**Lessons of October:** London, weekend of November 4 and 5. A weekend of debate and discussion commemorating the October Revolution. Group work on 'The Revolutionary Party and its Paper', 'Communists, Women and Feminism' and 'The National Question'. Write or ring for details.

**Under the Banner of October:** Rally, with speakers from the Communist Party of Turkey, Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (*Rahe Kargar*) and *The Leninist*. Saturday November 4, 8pm. Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, Archway, London N19.

### Hands Off Ireland!

**Behind the Mask:** Hear the IRA's side of the Irish war. The 'Behind the Mask' video gives the side of the story that you won't hear on TV. Come and hear the voices of Irish resistance!

**North London:** Monday October 30, 7.30pm. Red Rose Club, 127 Seven Sisters Road (Finsbury Park tube).

**South London:** Wednesday November 1, 7.30pm. St Matthews Meeting Place, Brixton SW2 (Brixton tube).

Hands Off Ireland! will be mobilising contingents on the following marches:

**Terence McSwiney Commemoration:** Kennington Park, London (opposite Oval tube), Saturday October 28. Assemble 12 noon.

**Manchester Martyrs Commemoration:** Sunday November 26. Assemble 12.30pm, Longsight Market, Dickenson Road, Manchester. Write or ring HOI! for transport details.

### Workers Theatre Movement

**Performances:** On the Terence McSwiney commemoration (see above), 'Under the Banner of October' Rally (also see above) and on the City AA non-stop picket of the South African embassy, November 12, 12.30pm.

**Rehearsals:** Every Sunday in London. Phone Paul Harrington on 01-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of WTM activities.

### Unemployed Workers Charter

Help to give the UWC a solid base in the labour movement. Use our affiliation circular to win trade union and other organisations to affiliate to the Unemployed Workers Charter (National organisations £100pa, local organisations £25pa).

**Central London meetings:** 8pm every Monday to discuss the politics of unemployment and to organise actions:

**October 30:** What is the UWC? How the UWC fights ET, YTS and "actively seeking work" harassment.

**November 6:** How the National Unemployed Workers Movement was founded.

**November 13:** The CPSA dispute: understaffed, underpaid and overtime.

**November 20:** The first National Hunger March: 1922.

**November 21:** Solidarity with the Engineers' strike for a 35 hour week.

For further information ring 01-431 3135 or write UWC, BCM Box 928, London, WC1N 3XX.

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## Afghanistan – Gorbachev is the biggest danger

**The heroic tenaciousness of the resistance of the PDPA and those, particularly in the urban centres of the country, who look to its lead, is an inspiration to all communists and working class partisans everywhere**

IT IS now some seven months since the treacherous withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Against all expectations, the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan has so far withstood the onslaught of the barbaric counterrevolutionary mujahedin. The heroic tenaciousness of the resistance of the PDPA and those, particularly in the urban centres of the country, who look to its lead, is an inspiration to all communists and working class partisans everywhere.

The triumphant mujahedin first came to a halt in its advance, then faltered and is now increasingly fragmenting as frustration begins to prise open the counterrevolutionary front's latent divisions.

Those on the left who refuse to recognise that the PDPA government in Kabul is a product of a profound revolution that shattered the bourgeois/feudal state in 1978 have an eloquent argument presented to the contrary by its desperate resistance. The majority of revolutionary groups in Britain rubbished the 1978 Saur revolution as nothing more than a "coup d'état" (the RCP, Spartacist League, Workers Power, SWP, *et al.*). They should now be asked to explain how this 'coup', a conspiracy which in Lenin's words would have "revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and [have] aroused no sympathy amongst the masses" (*Collected Works*, Vol 22, p355) has inspired such selfless devotion and bravery from ordinary Afghans.

In particular, large numbers of urban women, many as young as fourteen or fifteen years, have rushed to volunteer for military duties in defence of the revolution. Thus, Marx's profound observation that the progressive content inherent in any regime or social system can be gauged by the position it allots women has found brilliant confirmation in the enthusiasm that women in Afghanistan have displayed in defence of the social revolution.

However there is no room for complacency. While the PDPA still clings to power, the mujahedin counterrevolutionaries are far from defeated. Until now, both sides in the civil war have been able to rely on support from their respective allies. Both have been able to mobilise a considerable social base – the communists from the cities, the mujahedin from the reactionary countryside. But, this period has been at best an unstable interregnum.

The daily armed skirmishes with the mujahedin continue and remain evenly balanced. US backers of the counterrevolutionaries now accept in the light of recent setbacks that there is little chance of a swift military victory. Instead, they talk of a war of attrition lasting two, perhaps three years. In light of the mujahedin's failure to capture any major urban centre, the

strategy for the rest of this year is to be one of "dispersed attacks". This in itself is tacit admission of the strategic deadlock the conflict has reached. Translated into crude terms what this largely entails is mujahedin missile attacks on the airfields which are the PDPA's life-line; then, the swift repair of these fields by government bulldozers.

On the government side, morale has been greatly boosted by two major successes: the defeated of the mujahedin siege of Jalalabad and the more recent huge supply convoys that fought their way through to the city of Kandahar in the south. As *The Independent* noted, this "was a psychological victory as well as a logistical one for the government forces, who have been under seige for nearly a decade." (September 22)

It was the relief of Jalalabad, however, that was of particular significance to the progressive forces in Afghanistan: more than that, it was a great victory for the world's proletariat. When the mujahedin attacked Jalalabad, the "gateway to Kabul", on March 6, the city seemed doomed. Sandy Gall, TV's roving reactionary, practically screamed his briefs as he assured us that Jalalabad would fall "in a few days".

Gall's paroxysms of revanchist delight notwithstanding, the siege of Jalalabad was broken nine weeks later by the PDPA. The *Financial Times* captured the more sober mood of imperialism internationally when it noted that "these days nobody talks of capturing Kabul. The snows have thawed and excuses run out." (May 15)

Impressive though these successes are, they do little more than maintain the *status quo*. Even in 1986, with the support of the Soviet Army, the general secretary of the PDPA, Najibullah, estimated that the government only controlled some 35% of the country outside the towns. With the pull out of the Soviet Armed Forces even that small percentage must have contracted dramatically – basically the forces of progress are besieged in the urban centres, in what is an overwhelmingly rural country.

Frustration with the military impasse has found expression within the PDPA. Some Party elements within the Afghan army are calling for missile and 'hot-foot' attacks on guerrilla positions within Pakistan itself. Yet the official leadership of the Party are loath to follow this line of action for a number of political reasons.

To do anything other than simply rebuff the mujahedin forces, to actually start pursuing them into their base areas, would potentially unite their fractious forces against the PDPA, in much the same way it seems that the PDPA itself has closed ranks in the face of deadly onslaught on the revolution.

Much of Najibullah's strategy

has relied on an attempt to ferment and exacerbate the very sharp ethnic/political/ideological divisions within the ranks of the reactionaries – who are already split between the seven groups in Peshawar and the eight groups supporting the Islamic regime in Iran. Of course, while this is not a wrong tactic in itself, it is not one that can do much other than maintain the *status quo*: the PDPA will remain besieged.

The new mood of optimism in the PDPA ranks brought about by success on the battlefield finds a reflection in Najibullah's more pugnacious statements. For instance, he has so far emphatically rejected any suggestions that he resign in order to pave the way for peace talks with the mujahedin. The US and Pakistan must face 'reality' and negotiate with the PDPA with him at the head of it, he insists.

Again, this is an expression of the fixed defensive position of PDPA rather than a real intransigent revolutionary determination. After all, previous 'resignations' of Party heads – as when the Soviet Armed Forces permanently 'resigned' Amin or when Karmal was kicked upstairs – have signalled a realignment to the right in the Party leadership and further accommodation of the counterrevolutionaries.

For example, let us not forget the ambiguities that surrounded the 'resignation' of Barbrak Karmal and his replacement by Najibullah back in 1986. As well as the comrade's "ill health" (not normally an important factor in the resignation of leaders of the world communist movement – witness the political longevity of octogenarian leaders in China), the PDPA also cited vague "international reasons". Obviously, this was a reference to the Geneva negotiations.

These negotiations between Afghanistan, (behind which stood the USSR with its massive aid and substantial troop presence) and Pakistan (behind which stands US led international imperialism which has financed the counterrevolutionary war to the tune of \$ billions annually) started in 1982. Although some became optimistic after the November Gorbachev/Reagan summit, the talks deadlocked over the Afghan government's insistence that Pakistan drop its refusal to recognise the PDPA government in Kabul. To break this impasse and facilitate talks as they entered their seventh round, the PDPA dropped this insistence – and as a *quid pro quo*, probably Karmal as well.

At the centre of the negotiating differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan at this time lay the question of linking the withdrawal of Soviet troops with the already agreed articles for a settlement on non-interference and the return of refugees. Pakistan, pushed in particular by the US and Britain,

argued for an immediate withdrawal, once a settlement had been reached.

With the 1988 Geneva Agreement they got their way. It paved the way for the withdrawal of the Soviet Army beginning on February 15 of this year. This was a stab in the back for the Afghan revolution. Nonetheless until now, the USSR has continued to supply Kabul with massive economic and military aid.

Predictably, this has been cited by US officials as the reason for their refusal to accept a mutual agreement by Washington and Moscow not to send aid (so-called 'positive symmetry'). The fact that Soviet aid to Kabul is allowed and US-Pakistani 'aid' to the mujahedin disallowed under the provisions of the April 1988 Geneva Accords is ignored by the imperialists.

The rapidity of developments in the Soviet Union, and in particular the continuing jerks to the right of the Gorbachev leadership of the CPSU are in fact a far greater danger to the PDPA government than the mujahedin cutthroats.

While Najibullah insists he will remain the head of the government and that the US and Pakistan must face 'reality' and negotiate with him Pakistan and the USSR have agreed a draft resolution calling on the UN secretary general to arrange a "political dialogue" with the aim of achieving a "broadly based" government. *The Guardian* noted that "significantly, it omits any mention of the existing Soviet-backed regime of President Mohammed Najibullah. This strongly implies that Moscow has dropped its insistence on the inclusion of ... [the] PDPA, in its present form, in a new government." (October 5 1989)

If this is true, what can this mean other than the total and irreversible abandonment of the PDPA by the Soviet government? The Afghan interim government in Peshawar – the coalition of the seven counterrevolutionary guerrilla groups fighting the PDPA government – has always insisted that it will never deal with Najibullah or the PDPA, only good Muslims" from within the present regime.

The willingness of the Gorbachevite leadership to horse trade the present government and along with it the still living (if bleeding) Afghan revolution can only encourage the counterrevolutionaries to step up their attacks. So the Afghan revolution remains in mortal danger, not only from counterrevolutionaries and the forces of international imperialism but from Gorbachevism.

The potential desertion of the PDPA by Gorbachev underlines the fragility of the present military and political deadlock between the two sides in the civil war. In particular, it exposes the political weakness of the present PDPA leadership. It owes its origins to the reformist Parcham wing of the Party which always sought accommodation with bourgeois forces in the country. To this internal lack of political independence must be added its total subservience to the leadership of the CPSU. Parcham has not only followed every rightist twist and turn to come from every leader from Kruschev to Gorbachev but was actually placed in

power through an opportunist coup engineered in Moscow and carried out by Soviet forces in December 1979.

In a recent interview given to *The Independent* (October 4), Najibullah glibly dismissed reports that the Party remained divided: "Rivalry within the PDPA is a phenomenon that more or less belongs to the past" he is reported as saying. This is hard to accept. In mid-1986, we noted that despite the fact that the opportunist Parcham grouping dominated the government ministries with the backing of the USSR and its armed forces, it only made up about 40% of the PDPA's membership. The Soviet leadership might have instituted an opportunist coup, executing 98 members of Khalq, including comrade Hafizullah Amin, the real leader of the Afghan revolution, yet many Party members are deeply suspicious of the direction Najibullah is taking.

Under the influence of opportunism, the Party has made concession after concession both to Islam and nationalism. PDPA leaders have no compunction now in describing the regime as an 'Islamic' one. Also, the Najibullah government has turned to nationalism in an effort to present the mujahedin as foreign backed invaders. While these manoeuvres may win temporary respite, they are fraught with danger in the longer term. After all, which side can claim better Islamic credentials – the mujahedin or the PDPA? And for a regime that has survived largely through the sponsorship of the Soviet Union, using the nationalist card is a surely bad idea.

Similarly, as part of the policy of fostering disunity in the ranks of the counterrevolutionaries, the Kabul has had considerable success in winning over mujahedin field commanders and turning them into semi-autonomous militias. "The secret of our success lies in these militias", claims Najibullah. Yet these defections have relied on lavish hand outs of money and arms. If the USSR withdraws material as well as military aid from the regime, the potential to thus bribe elements of the social base of the mujahedin will be ended. And then what?

The fickle nature of the support for the government from these type of forces was illustrated by an *Independent* correspondent: "One militia man confided that he was still a mujahedin supporter. But that was in the street when I was away from my government guide. Once reunited with my guide the militiaman declared his support for the government." (September 22 1989)

In the absence of revolution in the advanced capitalist countries, the successful defence of the Afghan revolution is dependent on the world's revolutionary centre, the Soviet Union. Yes, Afghan communists need massive Soviet material and military aid simply to fend off their medievalist enemies. Gorbachevism put that in jeopardy. What this means is that to defend the revolution in their own country, the communists in Afghanistan desperately need a political revolution in the Soviet Union.

Ian Mahoney

# Which Road?

## Part 4

### A critique of the *British Road to Socialism*

We shall now turn our attention to the third section of the 1978 edition of the *BRS* beginning with the specific and general features of revolution.

#### 3. Towards socialist revolution.

Winning state power, says the *BRS*, "can only be achieved when the great majority of the British people are convinced of its necessity and prepared to bring it about." (our emphasis p36) Why not say: winning state power can only be achieved when the majority of the working class is convinced of the necessity of winning state power and are prepared to die to bring it about?

The *BRS* says that success in winning state power "depends on the left becoming the dominant force in the Labour and democratic movement and on the building of a mass Communist Party as part of that left." (our emphasis, p36) It is because the *BRS* is reformist to the core that there is such concern for 'great majorities' of the 'British people' and that amorphous body the 'left'.

For communists it is the balance of class

forces during a revolutionary situation which is crucial. Above all at the end of the day success hinges on the extent to which the Communist Party – not the 'left' – has developed a scientific strategy and is able to act as the general staff of the proletariat.

The central aim of the *BRS* is gaining a majority in parliament, "enabling the formation of left and later socialist governments". According to the *BRS* this evolutionary project is "based on our [British – JC] political and social conditions, degree of working class organisation, and the new world setting." To justify what can only be called British narrowness and reformist make believe the *BRS* uses the following sly argument.

Every "socialist revolution is unique in specific respects" says the *BRS*, stating the obvious. "There are universal principles, such as the transfer of state power, but no universal model or pattern that can be followed." It follows this up with the rather incongruous assertion that: "Export of revolution is a myth." And that: "Decisive social change can only arise out of the particular circumstances in each country." (our emphasis p36)

Let us disentangle truth from distortion. First, "unique" and "specific" conditions. Obviously every revolution is "unique in specific respects". But what the *BRS* – which has reformist politics unique to Britain in specific respects – is out to do is to prove its loyalty to bourgeois democracy and the bour-

geois state by implicitly attacking the very real "universal principles" of revolution.

A genuinely revolutionary programme draws on the most advanced theory available to the working class in the world. But communists apply this to the specific conditions which appertain in a particular country. For Leninists it could not be otherwise.

The Bolsheviks could never have succeeded if their programme had not taken into account the existence of the Tsarist autocracy, Russia's place in the world division of labour and the possibility of forging a revolutionary alliance between the proletariat and peasantry, etc.

Likewise communists in Vietnam had to focus in on the crucial question of gaining national independence and unity, for communists in South Africa the revolutionary overthrow of apartheid is a central question, as is the necessity for communists in Turkey to recognise the imperialist ambitions of finance capital in their country.

We could go on. But there is little point. There is no argument – at least from us. Communists should not and cannot ignore national conditions and peculiarities. The real point though is that the *BRS* wants to blow specific features in Britain out of all proportion and reduce general laws of revolution to the level of empty platitudes.

The *BRS* is hardly the first to do this. Time and time again, opportunists around the world

have maintained that the conditions in their country invalidate this or that principle. This was the essence of Bernsteinism in Germany, Millerandism in France and Browderism in the USA. The *BRS* is from the same stable. Its attempt to plead innocence by citing "universal principles" is worthless. This is easily shown. For example the claim that the "transfer of power" is a "universal principle" is a flimsy reformist attempt to sidestep the iron law of revolution, ie, that the bourgeois state must be smashed and that a new, proletarian state must arise from the rubble of the old.

In this light it is clear why a dismissal of the "export of revolution" has been inserted. It is not there as a counter to those in the Euro camp demanding that the Soviet Union invades Britain and brings socialism with it, Eastern European style, behind the tank tracks of the Red Army, so to speak. Neither is it because the authors once dreamed of a militaristic future where they themselves export socialism via some sort of *BRS* Red Army all of their own.

In part the export of revolution 'myth' has to be attacked because the authors of the 1978 *BRS* have inherited the opportunist defence of previous editions against Cold War charges of being agents of a foreign power. But it is more than that. The *BRS* is irredeemably national and anti-international.

Given the *BRS*'s inability to see beyond "British conditions and democracy", any

ideas on the unity of the working class struggle on world scale, the need to subordinate the national to the international, the part to the whole, would seem to be outside interference. Proletarian internationalism is in fact the real target behind attacks on the export of revolution. In this way the *BRS* does not make a mere mistake. It openly abandons the real struggle for socialism, which is international if it is anything, being the first stage of communism which can only exist on a world wide basis.

The *BRS* repeatedly emphasises that the advance to socialism in Britain "will be our own road." This, as we have seen, is to state the obvious. But, again as we have seen, what the authors of the *BRS* have in mind is to deny the general and the international. Let the *BRS* speak and hang itself.

"The fact that it will be different from that taken in other countries is due not only to the specific position taken within Britain, but to changes in the world brought about after the October Revolution in Russia in 1917. This, the most significant event in world history, showed in practice that the workers and their allies could gain state power and construct socialism. But the path of the revolution, insurrection and the creation of the Soviets as organs of power, and the subsequent development of a one party system, were determined by the particular conditions and background of Tsarist autocratic rule, counterrevolution and civil war, and imperialist intervention. Similarly, the methods by which socialism has been established in other countries have been determined by their particular circumstances and by the world situation at the time.

"The different conditions and history of Britain, and the changed balance of class forces, make it possible to achieve socialism in Britain by a different road. The working class is the majority of the population. The potential power of the labour movement is enormous. Together with its allies it can isolate the big capitalists and confront them with overwhelming strength. The democratic forces have had long experience of struggle and have won civil liberties and democratic rights which, though under constant attack, give the basis for carrying forward the political struggle. Parliament, itself the product of past battles for democracy, can be, and needs to be, transformed into the democratic instrument of the will of the working class and its allies, who constitute the vast majority of the people. Though there is the possibility of outside intervention against a socialist government, this has been diminished by the change in the world balance of forces.

"Through the democratic transformation of society, including the state, in all stages of the struggle, democracy can be carried to its utmost limits, breaking all bourgeois restrictions on it, and creating the conditions for advance to socialism without armed struggle." (our emphasis, p36-37)

We have quoted at length to leave no shadow of doubt concerning the *BRS*'s position. We have already dealt with the fallacy that the world balance of forces has decisively shifted towards socialism. With the defeats of the steelworkers, the miners' Great Strike, the printers at Wapping and the dockers behind us we can also dismiss the idea that the British labour movement as presently organised is an irresistible force. As to the idea that democracy will be taken to its "utmost limits" during the transition from capitalism to socialism, this is absurd.

Democracy will be taken to its "utmost limits" during the transition from socialism to communism, the point where democracy – a form of the state – negates itself with the disappearance of classes and the emergence of the "kingdom of freedom". But what of the *BRS*'s praise of the October Revolution?

The truth is that while it pays tribute to the October Revolution the *BRS* goes out of its way to distance itself from the general laws of revolution definitively proved by that glorious event. For while there were many specific features in the Russian revolution, such as the overthrow of Tsarism, the government of 'socialists' headed by Kerensky, the extreme backwardness of the country combined with highly advanced features etc, and while there were specific features in its subsequent development, such as the emergence of the one party system, the consolidation of bureaucratic socialism etc, the general laws were clear to see and remain valid:

1. The necessity of violently smashing the bourgeois state and replacing it with a new, proletarian one – its most dynamic form being that of soviets.
2. The replacement of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the dictatorship of the prolet-

ariat.

3. The need for a working class vanguard party based on the most advanced scientific theory.
4. The development of capitalism, the emergence of imperialism, and a world economy means that the struggle of the proletariat must become ever more unified and international.

It is our contention that the emergence of soviets, their becoming organs of state power, the smashing of the old state, the dispersal of the bourgeois parliament – the Constituent Assembly, the creation of the Third International, were all direct products of the general laws of revolution. Such features are not, as the *BRS* would have us believe, the products of peculiar features of Russia at that time.

In saying this we are following in the footsteps of those giants who founded the Comintern, ie those who actually carried out the October Revolution. Having let the *BRS* speak for itself in its efforts to confuse the specific features of the October Revolution with the general, we will accord the Comintern the right of reply. The *Platform* of its first congress makes its position perfectly clear.

"**The conquest of political power by the proletariat means the destruction of the political power of the bourgeoisie.** The bourgeois state apparatus with its capitalist army commanded by the bourgeois-Junker officers, with its police and gendarmerie, is the strongest weapon the bourgeoisie possesses. The capture of state power must not mean simply a change in personnel in ministries, but the elimination of the hostile state apparatus, the concentration of real power in the hands of the proletariat, the disarming of the bourgeoisie, the counterrevolutionaries and the White Guard, and the arming of the proletariat, the revolutionary soldiers and the Red Workers Guard; the removal of all bourgeois judges and the organisation of a proletarian court; the abolition of the rule of the reactionary civil service and the creation of new proletarian organs of administration. The victory of the proletariat is guaranteed by the disruption of the enemy's power and the organisation of proletarian power. The bourgeois state apparatus has to be shattered and a proletarian state machine constructed. Only when the proletariat has finally broken the resistance of the bourgeoisie and is clearly the victor can former opponents be gradually brought under control and made to contribute to the construction of communist society ...

"**the new type of state power, known as the Soviet system, ensures the proletariat the opportunity of guaranteeing its rights and freedoms in practice.** Soviet power provides the people with the best palaces, houses, printing works, stocks of paper etc for their press, and clubs for their meetings. Only such measures make proletarian democracy really possible ... The Soviet system with its right of recall, the combination of legislative and executive power and the consequent position of Soviets as working bodies, is able to link the masses with the administrative organs. This link is further strengthened by the electoral system which is based on production units rather than artificial territorial constituencies.

"**Thus the Soviet system makes possible genuine proletarian democracy – a democracy for the proletariat, by the proletariat and against the bourgeoisie ... Only an International, capable of subordinating so-called national interests to the interests of international revolution, will organise aid on an international scale, for without economic and other forms of mutual support the proletariat is not in a position to build a new society.**" (our emphasis, *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, London 1980, pp40-45)

Have the general laws, proclaimed by the Communist International, been invalidated by subsequent events; do the conditions prevailing today force us to reconsider them?

We think not!

The state machine in Britain, like all others in imperialist countries, is a bureaucratic-military one. It has a huge military machine costing tens of billions per annum, 300,000 in its armed forces, 150,000 members of its police force and a truly massive bureaucracy. For the masses, democracy remains only formal, parliament is a thoroughly bourgeois institution, and terror is always just below the surface.

The truth is that the smashing of the bourgeois state remains the central task for us today. We too must construct a new proletarian state on the ruins of the old bourgeois order, the dictatorship of the proletariat must be used to crush all bourgeois opposition.

And we would maintain that the most suitable form for the dictatorship of the proletariat to take, the best form for the transition of socialism to communism, is workers' councils or soviets.

The idea of soviets in Britain is inconceivable for the authors of the *BRS*. Indeed, for all 'official communists' soviets have become an anachronism or a subject of fun, alright for Russia in 1917, but for Wakefield, Wimbleton and Warsop? Hardly!

Such is the ideological degeneration of some 'official communism'. It dribbles on about the marvels of bourgeois democracy, the possibility of using the enemy's state to build communism and seeks relevance by liquidating itself into the living dead politics of CND. However, while these 'official communists' have forgotten everything about Marxism they have learned something. They have learned to hate those who refuse to abandon the truths of Marxism for the philistine world of opportunism.

We are the butt of all sorts of attacks, "Ghengis Khan communists", "Stalinists", "authoritarians", "ultra-leftists", the list is endless. But apart from different 'dirty' names it is our supposed inability to recognise that the road to socialism will not be that of October, with its Red Guards, soviets and insurrection, that is meant to clinch the argument. Britain – being an advanced country, you see – is beyond all that.

In this way these opportunists not only attack *The Leninist* but Lenin. For him, as with us, October showed the way forward for all humanity. Far from advanced capitalist countries having to tread their own highly 'original road', Lenin recognised that in such countries the class struggle could be more vicious. Democracy could allow workers to recognise that it is not lack of rights, rather their position as wage slaves, that keeps them oppressed. With the leadership of communists, democracy can be used to tear away the facade of mystification, habit and illusion that hides the exploitative reality of capitalist society. At the First Congress of the Communist International Lenin declared:

"Marxists have always maintained that the more developed, the 'purer' democracy is, the more marked, acute and merciless the class struggle becomes and the 'purer' the capitalist oppression and bourgeois dictatorship." (CW, Vol 28 p461)

We adhere to Lenin's position. It is for this reason that we struggle for civil liberties and democratic rights in Britain today – to make the true nature of bourgeois rule crystal clear. For us any rights gained must be seen in the light of preparing the masses for revolution.

The authors of the *BRS* cannot see any of this. For them the extension of bourgeois democracy will in itself provide a smooth British road to socialism away from capitalism. In doing so it will, they say, avoid the dangerous road of insurrection and proletarian dictatorship of October. And although foolishly claiming to be highly "original", Lenin in his own day had to deal with opportunists with exactly the same problems:

"... what constitutes their [that is the opportunists – JC] short-sightedness in matters of theory, their subservience to bourgeois prejudices and their political betrayal of the proletariat is their failure to understand that in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or that of the proletariat. Dreams of some third way are reactionary, petty-bourgeois lamentations. That is borne out by more than a century of development of bourgeois democracy and the working class movement in all the advanced countries ... This is also borne out by the whole science of political economy, by the entire content of Marxism, which reveals the economic inevitability, wherever commodity production prevails, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that can be replaced by the class which the very growth of capitalism develops, multiplies, welds together and strengthens, that is the proletarian class."

More:

"It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism – the toiling classes." (Ibid, pp463, 464, 465)

We think that our extensive quotes from Lenin at the first congress of the Comintern in 1919, when he addressed the world's proletariat, shows what he at least thought about the fundamental laws of revolution. Centrally, on

top of this we add that nothing fundamental has changed since then to invalidate Lenin's position.

If the authors of the *BRS* were to be intellectually consistent they would have to tell us that:

1. Lenin was wrong all along, in Russia possibly, in the west definitely; or, alternatively.
2. At so and so date what Lenin said about the universal applicability of the general laws of proletarian revolution revealed by October 1917 became out of date.

The Pope and other princes of the church have to lie. So do the authors of the *BRS*. If the Pope were honest he would have to say that Jesus was a Palestinian apocalyptic revolutionary who hated the rich and sought to bring down all existing governments; that he was a dangerous subversive who deserved the death sentence he got. Of course, to do that would be to commit religious suicide. Much better to continue dressing up in bejewelled robes and keep in with the powers that be by telling the poor that they will find salvation only when they are dead. The authors of the *BRS* in their own way do exactly the same.

They cannot admit the simple truth that Lenin was a revolutionary who believed in revolution. Much better to keep in with the labour bureaucracy and pay lip service to Lenin's "general laws" of October, all the while denying them through linguistic tricks. Much better to promise the proletariat that they will find salvation through bourgeois democracy than tell the truth. The lies of these people are as transparent as the Pope's, only (if that's possible) even more sickening.

In the name of Marxism-Leninism the authors of the *BRS* monstrously claim that parliament – apparently a "product of past battles for democracy" – can be transformed into an institution serving the masses. Yet in all honesty it cannot be denied that both Marx and Lenin would have violently disagreed.

For Marx and Lenin the capitalist military-bureaucratic state machine had to be smashed and replaced by specifically proletarian organs of state power. Can this be denied? All tricks aside, we think not. So let us conclude our rather lengthy comments on this subsection by dealing more comprehensively with soviets.

Marx first wrote about the necessity of smashing the state machine as a result of the lessons he drew from the revolutions of 1848. In spite of this it was not until after the revolutionary events of Paris 1871 that he answered the question of what was to replace the old state. When his *well grubbed old mole* resurfaced, it provided the first example of a workers' state machine – *the Commune*.

Although members of the Commune were elected by universal suffrage, Paris had been deserted by its 'upper class' inhabitants, the *fileurs*. The electorate consisted overwhelmingly of revolutionised common people, therefore the Commune was the state organisation of this stratum of the population.

The delegates to the Commune were subject to immediate recall, and its first decree was to replace the standing army with the armed people in the form of the National Guard. Other measures included regulations limiting the pay of Commune officials to that of workingmen, and the right to elect and recall all members of the judiciary.

This first example of a workers' state enabled Marx and Engels to draw the theoretical lessons concerning the future form of the state. Their theory was always based on concrete foundations, never on utopian speculation of the sort the *BRS* wallows in. Their scientific generalisations on the state were confirmed with dramatic clarity by first the 1905 and then the February and October 1917 revolutions in Russia. Soviets of workers, peasants and soldiers emerged from the cauldron of the class struggle, and it was in their name the Bolsheviks seized power, creating the world's first socialist state.

The Russian Revolution was not a unique, purely Russian event. It was the epicentre of a profound world capitalist general crisis. Not surprisingly therefore even before the dust settled in Russia other countries experienced their 'Octobers'. In Hungary, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Latvia and various German cities short lived Soviet Republics were established. The bourgeois order in Italy and Austria was shaken by the rumblings of soviet power; and even in 'conservative' Britain embryonic soviets emerged in the form of the Councils of Action.

Soviets, like the Commune, were not invented by revolutionary theorists, they sprung forth from the spontaneous struggle of the working class, as a higher form of class organisation, but similar to trade unions and co-operatives in that they embraced the mass of workers.

Unlike parliament, soviets are based on production units, on factories, mills, mines, offices, hospitals, depots – uniting all workers, overcoming sectional differences, organising workers as a class, not as atomised ‘citizens’. It is these organisations we look to. We have no faith in the fetid parliament of the reactionary bourgeoisie. Society organised along soviet lines could evolve into communism, something that could not be said about the BRS’s worked out in every detail and never to be realised reformist construction.

Soviets are not specific features of the Russian Revolution, as the BRS ignorantly pronounces. We see every reason why they should re-emerge, given acute class struggle. This has nothing to do with dreaming, it is based solidly on the history of the working class over the last hundred plus years, fully in accordance with the generalisations of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the greatest contributors to scientific socialism.

Indeed life has proved our expectations justified. During the miners’ Great Strike of 1984-5, what did we see? We saw the emergence of embryonic organs of working class power, not in parliament but in the form of the Miners’ Support Groups. Organised in just about every city and town, they contained almost the whole of the advanced section of our class as well as specific representatives of left groups and parties, militant trade union branches and other workers’ organisations.

We did our utmost to encourage what was embryonic to go to full development. Of course, this did not happen, but then the same can be said of the Councils of Action in 1920 and 1926, to which most revolutionary groups quite rightly give great weight. The Miners’ Support Groups pointed to what will come. In that light, although the miners were defeated, nothing should or can take away from their struggle and the fact that it gave us a glimpse of the future. As such it was worth 1,000 editions or versions of the BRS.

The masses showed yet again that it is they, not the inventors of utopian roads, who are the makers of history. During periods of intense class struggle – such as the miners’ Great Strike – they perform creative miracles that leave so-called ‘creative’ Marxists standing.

Communists learn from the masses. Marx and Engels did, Lenin did and so has *The Leninist*. When asked what the dictatorship of the proletariat in Britain will look like, we say look at the miners’ Great Strike. Although it had many of the features of past industrial struggles it will be “celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society” (Marx on the Paris Commune).

### 3.1. Next stage in the revolutionary process

“It is impossible,” it is maintained, “to proceed overnight from Labour governments which in effect manage capitalism to a government which introduces socialism.”

The October Revolution showed that is was possible to do exactly that. No matter: what does the BRS care for reality? But let us follow through the BRS’s line of reasoning. For it, before socialism, in the meantime, we must win “a new type of Labour government, which will begin to carry out a left policy”. (pp37-38) This government: “has the task of putting Britain on a new course, so that far-reaching changes in society are initiated, the crisis is tackled at the expense of the big capitalists and not the working people, democratic rights are greatly extended and the quality of life and personal freedoms enhanced”. (p38) In other words a left reformist government.

It would, according to the BRS, save British industry, massively extend the nationalised sector of the economy, abolish the House of Lords and the monarchy, create Scottish and Welsh parliaments, and on top of that it would pursue an independent foreign policy, and withdraw British troops from abroad (except Ireland – where they would merely withdraw to barracks).

We would not rule out the possibility of such a government coming into office. Examples of reformist governments are numerous. A few years ago we saw a socialist/communist coalition in France. This was a BRS type government. The real question is not whether such a government is possible in Britain. No, the question we must ask is could such a government solve the crisis in the interests of the working class and would it mark a qualitative break from capitalism? To this we can give a simple reply – no!

The fundamental laws of capitalism cannot be negated without destroying capitalism itself. This is true whatever sort of government manages capitalism. The capitalist crisis can only be resolved within capitalism on the backs of the workers through increasing the rate of exploitation and/or war. Ideas to the contrary are based on theories utterly alien to Marxism.

There can be no BRS non-imperialist, non-monopoly, prosperous and democratic form of capitalism which has to be achieved before the question of socialism can be put on the agenda. Programmatically there is no stage we aim at short of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state. Capitalism’s crisis is inevitable and can only be overcome positively through socialism, this is what Marxism teaches and history proves.

### 3.2. A new kind of Labour government

The reformist programme outlined in the BRS could apparently only be implemented in full “as a result of a new type of Labour government”. Quite right! There is unfortunately a problem. Such a “new type of Labour government” has never been seen before in the history of the planet and never will be. The BRS’s “new type of Labour Party”, as we have seen, goes against the very nature of Labourism and, for that matter, logic itself.

Never mind; we must, I suppose, let the BRS ramble on. The “new type of Labour government” which the authors of the BRS have invented in order to justify their utopian schema would not “be a socialist government carrying out a socialist revolution”. However “subsequent left governments” would, with the inclusion of communists, have a “more far-reaching” programme. (pp44-45)

### 3.3. The relationship between the governments and the Broad Democratic Alliance

We can be brief here, very brief. All this subsection outlines is the need for the pie in the sky “broad democratic alliance” to support pie in the sky “Labour governments of a new type” and the need for it to push this fantasy government further along the path of reform.

### 3.4. The revolutionary transition

Here we find a fuller outline of the BRS’s utopian idea of laying hold of the imperialist bourgeoisie’s military-bureaucratic state machine and using it to “transform” capitalism in Britain, through left, lefter, even leftester, even more left, and finally socialist governments, to socialism – the first stage of communism!

To cover its abject reformism, the BRS hypocritically declares that: “For social revolution and the transition to socialism, however, state power is critical.” Absolutely right! But then it adds: “What is needed is the transfer of state power from the old ruling class to the working class and its allies, and the transformation of the state apparatus so that it serves the needs of the working people.” (p46)

This is a classic example of opportunist sophistry, for while claiming that state power is “critical” on the one hand, it is contradicted by all this nonsense about “transferring” state power, “transforming” this state so that it serves the interests of socialism.

### 3.5. Meeting capitalist resistance

#### Revolution and left-reformism – reaction

The BRS fears that: “The ruling class will fight against this [reformist – JC] process by any possible means.” The ruling class would not play the game according to the rules, it might try and resort to “illegal methods, sabotage and an armed coup”. But if it did not, and if an election went the ‘wrong way’, being good ‘democrats’, “the Communist Party

would respect the verdict of the electors; if the Tories were returned to office, there would be no question of a coup from the left to reverse the electoral verdict”. The BRS assures liberal opinion that: “The real danger of a coup would come from the right.” (pp47-48)

Let us begin our comments on this muddle by looking at the possibility of capitalist resistance. Unless there was a developing revolutionary situation there seems no earthly reason for the capitalists to launch a coup.

This truth can be seen from the respectable history of Labour governments in this country as well as a host of other coup free reformist examples from Europe and around the world. If, on the other hand, capitalism was plunging into deep economic and political crisis, if the rulers were increasingly unable to rule in the old way, then the emergence of a left-reformist government would be a distinct possibility, as would the danger of a counterrevolutionary coup.

In a revolutionary situation, a left-reformist government would act not as a leadership, a stimulus, and a focal point for the revolutionary aspirations of the masses. No, on the contrary, it would act as a brake on revolutionary developments. The government forces would see themselves, as it were, between the devil of the revolutionary masses and the deep blue sea of reaction. Hence such a government could therefore play, in turn, a centrist role and then one of ‘democratic’ counterrevolution.

This was the situation in Russia in 1917. The Kerensky government (made up of two socialist parties, the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries) faced in turn the counterrevolutionary forces of Kornilov and the Whites, and the revolutionary masses, who were increasingly under the sway of the Bolsheviks.

Kerensky and his left-reformists were pushed by the revolutionary masses to enact far reaching reforms, making Russia the most democratic country in the world. Later, as the demands of capitalism and necessities of conducting the imperialist war asserted themselves, the government attempted to reverse many reforms. It banned the Bolsheviks and went over to the camp of counterrevolution.

Under these circumstances the Bolsheviks, under the whip of Lenin, considered it their internationalist duty to launch what the BRS might call a “coup from the left”, or in other words the October Revolution – an event on which the BRS lavishes fulsome praise while burying its key lessons.

Even more shocking for the BRS would be the Bolsheviks’ lack of “respect for the wishes of the electors” when it came to elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1918.

The Bolsheviks had supported slogans demanding the calling of the Constituent Assembly prior to October 1917, and had themselves presided over the organisation of the elections after October.

The Bolsheviks secured an absolute majority of the votes to the Constituent Assembly in Moscow and Petrograd, and were the leading party in most other cities, obtaining 175 seats (around 25% of the total vote nationwide). But this was compared with the Socialist Revolutionaries’ 410 seats, which gave them a clear majority in the 707 seat parliament.

However, the Bolsheviks argued that the list of candidates drawn up by the Socialist Revolutionaries did not reflect the subsequent split in the party and the creation of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party which gained substantially from the right in the elections to the soviets. This was a highly important matter. But even more important was the Bolsheviks’ insistence on the primacy of soviets over parliament. And at the Second Congress of Soviets, the Bolsheviks had 51% of the delegates, which gave them with their (then) allies, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, an overwhelming majority.

Following in the footsteps of the English and French revolutions, the Bolsheviks decided to disperse parliament. But as an illustration of the proletarian nature of the new order, and the contempt felt for the assembly, it was not a Cromwell or a Bonapart but the head of the military guard who walked in and declared its dispersal ... “because the guard is tired”.

The October Revolution had decided that real power was to lie with the soviets, hence parliament was consigned to the dustbin. Its irrelevance was attested to by the bourgeois historian EH Carr who is forced to admit that “the act of dissolution passed almost without protest” (*The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol 1 p130).

Although, as has been said, we consider

that in a revolutionary situation such a government as envisaged by the BRS could come to play a centrist and in the end a counterrevolutionary role, if it were threatened by a reactionary coup, we as revolutionaries would be quite right to rally to its defence. For any reactionary coup would really be aimed at resolving the revolution negatively, not merely at toppling a left reformist government. Our defence would not be of ‘democracy’ but of the revolutionary situation which we would want to see continue to its positive conclusion with a ‘coup from the left’.

## 4. Building a Socialist Britain

This is the last section of the *British Road*. It sets out the essentials (for it) of the new, socialist society. Because these matters are of a long term nature, for the future, it is understandable why we have less differences with this section. Despite this, there are some areas where we disagree and, in addition to stating them, we shall take the opportunity of presenting our positions on some important areas of agreement.

To begin with, we agree in essence with the statement that: “Socialist democracy is not an additional, but dispensable luxury, or something which can be postponed until a socialist economy has been created – it is essential to the building of socialism.” (p50)

### 4.1. The economics of socialism

The BRS is quite right to say that the first economic task of socialism is the “socialist nationalisation of all monopolies”, ie the expropriation of the expropriators. On this basis the “production of wealth would be greatly increased.” (p51)

We also agree, with minor reservations, that: “With the advent of socialist planning and the ending of direct conflict between worker and capitalist employer, the function of the trade unions would change. They would be independent of the state apparatus and active in defending workers’ interests, and would also, through the development of industrial democracy, play a vital role in creating the economic basis of socialism, co-operating with the socialist government and strengthening support for it. Management would be democratic, with workers’ participation on all levels, in planning industry as a whole and in every enterprise and department. The workers would have a dominant say in determining the conditions of work. Unions would be responsible for protecting the conditions of the workers and negotiating wages and other benefits. They, with the government, would need to guard against over-centralisation, bureaucracy, and the subordination of the interests of one section of workers to those of another section. Excessive pressure of production targets, abuses of the workforce and unreasonable demands made on them by managements or the central planning authorities would need to be avoided or corrected by the full development of industrial democracy.” (p53)

However, without qualification the BRS then says that “small businesses, shops and farms would have a place in socialist society.” Here there is a problem. Undoubtedly attempts to socialise every aspect of the economy in the immediate aftermath of revolution would meet with disaster. Nevertheless small scale commodity production is not only inefficient, it is also a breeding ground for capitalist ideas and attitudes. Because of this it is essential that as socialism develops those who own and run “small businesses, shops and farms” find their place in socialist society, first through the development of cooperatives and then through full integration into the socialised economy.

### 4.2. Foreign policy

#### Socialism – pacifism – war

There are a couple of points worth commenting on in this subsection.

The BRS thinks that there is a “principle” that socialist and capitalist states peacefully coexist. This is not true. The coexistence (unity) of opposites like socialist and capitalist states is temporary, their antagonistic contradiction permanent. Peaceful coexistence is for

us a tactic, a holding operation to facilitate the forward march of the world revolution, which will see the resolution of the contradiction between capitalism and socialism through the dialectic of the proletarian revolution.

The *BRS* goes on to claim that a "world without war and conquest requires the victory of national liberation everywhere; an end to all fascist and racist regimes; full and equal rights and independence of all nations, respect for their national integrity and non-interference in their internal affairs." (our emphasis, p55)

There are two gross blunders here. First, for there to be a "world without war" requires the complete victory of socialism on a world scale. This is a fundamental truth revealed by Marxism, not though for the *BRS*. But where the first blunder is a direct result of revisionism the second is the result, we presume, of plain stupidity. Or are we being too generous?

There are many, many nations in the world. Many more than there are states. In the USSR official sources say there are some one hundred nations (stable communities of people based on common territory, language, economy etc). The idea that these nations and all other nations on the planet should be 'independent' is thoroughly anti-Marxist.

Nations should, of course, have the right to self determination. That is the right to determine their future, the right to independence yes. But also the right to stay united with another nation or to agree to unity with others. Only for narrow nationalists should all nations be independent. We on the other hand aim for the voluntary unity of all nations in a World Union of Socialist States. Even before this the interests of the proletariat to fight for unity in the organisation of the largest and most highly centralised states. For example, the original idea of the Soviet Union was that all new socialist states would join it and produce an ever expanding and more powerful socialist state.

Our attitude towards the right of nations to independence is the same as our attitude towards marriage. We are in favour of the right to divorce. Yet that does not mean we advocate divorce. We do not picket registry offices urging loving couples not to 'tie the knot'. In fact, as we have indicated, we are in favour of the marriage of one nation to another – as long as it is a voluntary, loving, union where the right to divorce or temporary separation exists in the case of friction or breakdown.

But while the authors of the *BRS* might be simply stupid on independence for all nations, when it comes to war it is another matter. The *BRS* says that a socialist government "would renounce war as an instrument of foreign policy." (p55) This is head-in-the-clouds pacifism. War is the continuation of policy by other means. To renounce war before the end of class society is to renounce politics, and for that matter, the real world. Such pacifist sentiments have nothing in common with Marxism.

The *BRS* is at sixes and sevens. We note the claim on the same page that: "All movements for national liberation would be supported" (p55). A fine sentiment, especially considering such movements often, as is their right, resort to armed struggle (a right, because we do, after all, support the right of nations to self determination – which means by definition supporting the fight to exercise it). Surely, though, such a commitment to "support" such movements contradicts the renunciation of war. And it is worthwhile asking the *BRS* whether or not its "support" for the forces of national liberation extends to Ireland?

Anyway the Soviet Union has in practice not renounced war as an instrument of foreign policy. From its earliest days it used war/force as a legitimate means to further its interests: the war against the interventionist powers; its counter-invasion of Poland in 1919; its attack on Finland in 1939; its counter-invasion of Germany in 1944-45. Neither have other socialist countries embraced pacifism in practice. Cuba has, for example, physically aided those engaged in just struggle, including the sending of armed forces. And quite right too. We wholeheartedly agree with revolutionary wars.

### 4.3. Socialist democracy

Having just criticised the *BRS* for its call for the independence of all nations it is worth noting that in this subsection the authors flatly contradict what has just been said above when it comes concretely to Britain. Incorrectly calling Scotland and Wales "nations" (there is

a Scottish and Welsh nationality but no Scottish or Welsh nation – rather there is a British nation) it recognises their "right to self determination" (which we would also support). Then the *BRS* stresses the "advantage" of the unity of Britain! (on this at least we agree).

We now move on to a central disagreement. But as this concerns the *BRS*'s utopian dreams about the bourgeois parliament serving socialism (which we have already dealt with) we will confine ourselves to just a few comments on this occasion.

The *BRS* states: "The freedom of all democratic political parties, including those hostile to socialism, to contend for political support would be guaranteed." (Our emphasis, p56) And: "All parties should be pledged to respect the verdict of the electors, and to abide by the laws of the socialist state. If parties hostile to socialism failed to do so, and turned to the use of force to sabotage the democratic process, the socialist government and the working people would use whatever force was necessary to defend socialism." (p57)

In principle, we are not in favour of banning political parties simply because they are hostile to socialism. We know of no principle which demands their automatic banning. But, after the revolution, forces hostile to socialism would find themselves (and we can guarantee this) on the receiving end of the dictatorship of the workers. It could hardly be otherwise.

So socialism could never guarantee, in any absolute sense, especially in the immediate aftermath of seizing power, all political liberties, not least for our enemies. And it is worthwhile noting here that the *BRS*, which says that the bourgeoisie maintains its rule under capitalism mainly through "relying on consent", is now saying that in the last analysis the working class "would use whatever force necessary to defend socialism".

This said, within the established soviet system, purely bourgeois parties are irrelevant. They would have become completely marginalised because the democratic institutions of socialism will evolve out of the class struggle against the institutions of the bourgeoisie, not least bourgeois parties. Soviets, or workers' councils, begin life as organs of working class struggle against capitalism. Through revolution they are transformed into organs of working class state power against capitalism. Expecting bourgeois parties to find a nice cosy new life in such institutions is like expecting the Tory Party bigwigs to have flocked into the Miners' Support Groups during the Great Strike of 1984-5.

Consequently, declarations about respecting the "verdict of the electors" with regard to bourgeois parties have no relevance to the soviet system. Workers' parties would compete in soviet elections against each other, not against bourgeois parties. Under these conditions if the Communist Party found itself defeated it would of course respect the result. But in this case there would be no question of reverting to capitalism, such a fear under the established soviet system would be an utter absurdity.

A minor point worth touching upon now is religion. The *BRS* maintains that there "would be freedom of religious worship and propaganda in public or private, equality of all religious beliefs and creeds, and separation of church from state." (p58)

The problem here is not what is said, more what is left unsaid. There is no mention of the freedom of anti-religious propaganda, and the struggle by communists to eliminate religious prejudice and mystical mumbo-jumbo. To 'forget' this is to fall into opportunism, and as such is inexcusable.

### 4.4. Popular democratic power

This is a particularly bland subsection. Yes, we too are in favour of popular democratic power, and therefore agree with the *BRS* that: "In a socialist Britain there must be the fullest encouragement of ... democratic initiatives, as an essential check to bureaucracy and to abuse of power by the state." (p59) But we would go one further.

As we recognise that the basic contradiction within socialism is between the emerging law of planning and the declining (capitalist) law of value, we also recognise that socialism is a period of transition between capitalism and communism characterised by struggle for socialist democracy, which is the only way the law of planning can operate effectively.

So where the *BRS* places all its emphasis on "transforming" the bourgeois state and making sure it does not "abuse" its powers, we

place emphasis on ensuring that the (inevitable) bureaucracy is kept as the servant of society, as part of the long term aim of finally abolishing the bureaucracy altogether through the full development of socialist democracy (to the point where democracy in fact negates itself).

### 4.5. Women and socialism (See 5.4)

### 4.6. Political parties of the working class

This subsection claims that: "Socialism can only be won and built on the basis of Labour-Communist unity." (p60) This is more feeble minded nonsense. Let us repeat yet again that history shows the need for communist hegemony over the working class. The victory of socialism will be both a victory over capitalism and a victory over Labourism. Of course, in order to achieve that the tactic of the united workers' front could be used to achieve communist hegemony over sections of the working class previously dominated by Labour. But a such tactic is a temporary, passing one, to be used under specific conditions and is no principle.

So "Labour-Communist unity" is not the "only" way forward, rather a possible, passing tactic designed to destroy the influence of Labourism.

Another point: the *BRS* mentions two "political parties of the working class". We have already explained fully why we consider the Labour Party to be a bourgeois workers' party and as such a likely object of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But while that only leaves the Communist Party for the *BRS*, as we have indicated we think it perfectly feasible that various parties within the spectrum of genuine working class polities would exist and compete in election to workers' councils. This does not mean we underestimate the importance of a genuine Communist Party. Far from it. Only such a party can express the long term interests of the working class as a whole, as opposed to passing, sectional interests.

One more point: the *BRS* declares for "open and full debate in which all trends will participate". All we say to those who support or supported the *BRS* is try for a change practising what you preach. We await your considered reply to this polemic (though we wont be foolish and hold our breath). We certainly welcome and fully support open and full debate in which all trends participate. Open debate on all questions of principle is the best way to defeat opportunism, which is a vital prerequisite for the struggle in Britain.

### 4.7. Towards a communist society

This is the closing subsection of the *BRS*. While we cannot disagree with it, it is worth asking whether the *BRS* will ever get us a millimetre nearer socialism, let alone communism, where "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". Why should we base ourselves on the *BRS*'s utopian reformist dream about achieving communism through the bourgeois state and without revolution? Humanity already has behind it the example of October 1917 and has in its possession the scientific socialism of Marx, Engels and Lenin. As we have shown, no one should place any faith in the reformism of the *BRS*. There is only one road to socialism – the road of proletarian revolution.

### 5. Some specific questions

While going through the *BRS* we have deliberately refrained from dwelling on a number of questions which have a special significance. We will deal with parliamentary elections here, and then in the next supplement go on to the army, Ireland and, last but not least, women.

### 5.1. Parliamentary elections

We shall now briefly touch upon parliament and electoral tactics. Not surprisingly the *BRS* places great emphasis on parliamentary elections, and that includes the approach of communists, to which we will limit ourselves in

this section. According to the *BRS*, the CPGB "needs to increase its electoral activity, giving the maximum possible number of people the opportunity to vote communist, and winning representation in parliament as well as more local council seats." (p27)

Surely this contradicts the *BRS*'s desire for Labour Party general election victories? And the word "maximum", as well as the overall context, shows all too clearly that the *BRS* has elevated what should be a matter of tactics to the level of principle.

For those who consider parliamentary politics – in spite of protestations to the contrary – as the locomotive of history, this is natural. After all, the opportunists believe that parliament can be transformed into a genuine instrument of the democratic will of the British people. And that through a Labour government!

Our approach is very different. Yes, we advocate the standing of candidates by a genuine Communist Party in parliamentary elections (how many and against whom is a matter of tactical fine tuning). But not because of any illusions we have in parliament. The reason we would argue for parliamentary candidates – indeed we would consider it obligatory for a Communist Party to stand except in the most extreme circumstances – is because we want to use every avenue open to us to propagate the ideas of communism.

While the masses have illusions in the bourgeois parliament this is vital. And in the event of communists finding themselves in the House of Commons – that den of thieves, charlatans and knaves – we would use every parliamentary privilege and device to create a platform for the communist programme. Our MPs would be, in parliamentary terms, 'thugs', ie tribunes of the oppressed and advocates of violent revolution. Communist MPs in this way turn parliament against parliament, use it as a platform to expose parliamentary democracy and help prepare the conditions for its overthrow.

Because parliamentary democracy is bourgeois democracy, and thus moulded to serve bourgeois interests, it is merely coincidental that it once was a progressive institution. Despite all the myths manufactured by the toadies and sycophants, there can be no question that parliament is part of the bourgeois state machine. It plays the legislative role in that machine, providing a forum where various factions of bourgeois opinion can vent steam and vie for influence.

This function is separated from the executive role, carried out by other parts of the state machine. So it is not, and never has been, a working body; something abundantly clear to anyone who has ever listened to the pompous, turgid 'battles' in that talking shop, the 'best club in London'.

As we have seen throughout our critique of the *BRS*, although castigating the shallow nature of bourgeois democracy, it perpetrates the reformist lie that parliament can equally serve any stratum, section or class in society. In other words, the idea that parliament is above classes.

Of course, one house of parliament is not elected and not so long ago the suffrage was extremely restricted: before 1832 only 4.4% of the adult population were enfranchised; this rose to 16.4% after the act of that year. It was only in 1867 that any workers had the vote, and no women at all had the vote until 1921; true universal suffrage only became a reality after 1931, when the electorate became 96.6% of the adult population. So we see that there is nothing inherently popular about parliamentary democracy.

However, our opportunists insist, presumably because of universal suffrage, that the state can be transformed to serve the interests of the masses and that is why they want to stand in elections. This was not the view of Engels. He was most explicit in calling universal suffrage (although this was before women had the vote, the point is still valid) an instrument of bourgeois rule, and that it could be nothing more than "the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the present day state." (quoted by Lenin in his *State and Revolution*, CW Vol 25, p398)

We take the same position as Engels. By putting up candidates, genuine communists can gauge the readiness of the working class to make revolution. Obviously if large numbers are unwilling to vote for us they are highly unlikely to be ready to die in the struggle for socialism. When large numbers do vote for a genuine Communist Party then it is obvious that the masses are turning towards revolutionary ideas; then revolutionary sentiment must be turned into revolutionary action.

Jack Conrad